

OPINION 6
MYANMAR NIGHTMARE
CONTINUES UNABATED**WORLD 9**
US CARRIES OUT AIRSTRIKES
IN SYRIA**MONEY 10**
INDIA'S FOREX KITTY JUMPS BY
USD 12.8 BN TO USD 572.8 BNPublished From
DELHI LUCKNOW BHOPAL BHUBANESWAR
RANCHI RAIPUR CHANDIGARH
DEHRADUN HYDERABAD VIJAYWADALate City Vol. 16 Issue 80
*Air Surcharge Extra If Applicable

RANCHI, SATURDAY MARCH 25, 2023; PAGES 12 ₹3

the pioneer

www.dailypioneer.com

'HARDIK SIMILAR
TO DHONI AS
CAPTAIN'
11 SPORT

Rahul disqualified from LS

**Cong to launch nationwide strike,
Opp rallies around Rahul, accuses
BJP of doing 'vindictive politics'**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi was on Friday disqualified from the Lok Sabha, nearly 24 hours after a Surat court convicted him in a 2019 criminal defamation case over his "all thieves have Modi as the common surname" remark.

The disqualification will bar the 52-year-old former Congress president, a four-time MP, from contesting elections for eight years unless a higher court stays his conviction or lowers the sentence to below two years.

Soon after Rahul's disqualification, the Congress leadership got into a huddle at the party headquarters and deliberated on the way forward.

Late on Friday evening, the Congress announced a nationwide agitation against Rahul's disqualification, alleging that the Government has acted at lightning speed to "gag" him, and called for taking forward the efforts for the Opposition unity in a systematic manner.

Announcing Rahul's disqualification, the Lok Sabha

Secretariat in a notification said following his conviction by the court of Chief Judicial Magistrate, Surat, Rahul, Member of the Lok Sabha representing the Wayanad constituency of Kerala stands disqualified from the membership of the House from the date of his conviction i.e. March 23, 2023.

The Congress said it will fight the matter politically and legally. Hitting out at the Government, the Congress said it is "a black day for Indian democracy" and alleged that the action was driven by "political vendetta".

Hours before the notification was issued, Rahul attended the Lok Sabha proceedings in the morning session.

Before the proceedings commenced, he also participated in a meeting of party MPs in Parliament complex. Rahul said he is fighting for the voice of India and is ready to pay any price, hours after he was disqualified from the Lok Sabha.

Later, Rahul tweeted, "I am fighting for the voice of



Congress leader Rahul Gandhi leaves Parliament House complex in New Delhi on Friday

India. I am ready to pay every price."

However, the disqualification ostensibly has come as a blessing in disguise for the ragtag unity in Opposition, including TMC, AAP, SP, BRS which have been toeing a different line. On Friday, they echoed concern over the vindictive kind of politics and alleged that the Rahul was not given 30 days appeal space.

Some of them who had quit the Congress and are now part of other outfits too expressed their solidarity with Rahul.

Rahul is the second member of the Lok Sabha, after Lakshadweep MP PP Mohammed Faizal of the NCP, to have been disqualified in the recent past following conviction.

The Kavaratti sessions court in Lakshadweep had sentenced four persons, including Mohammed Faizal, to 10 years in jail after they were found guilty in an attempt-to-murder case. Following the conviction, Faizal was disqualified.

However, the Kerala High Court later suspended his conviction and sentence. According to the MP, the Lok Sabha Secretariat is yet to issue a notification revoking his disqualification.

Lies, slander part of Rahul's politics: Nadda

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

BJP president JP Nadda on Friday claimed Rahul Gandhi has a habit of levelling fabricated allegations having no connection with facts while alleging the Congress leader has a "huge arrogance but little understanding".

In a series of tweets amid a political fight between the BJP and the Congress following Rahul's conviction in a defamation case, Nadda alleged that "lies, personal slander and negative politics is integral" to his politics.

People's "punishment" to him will be more severe in the 2024 Lok Sabha polls than in 2019 when he lost in Amethi and the Congress was routed nationally, the BJP leader said.

He said, "By comparing OBC communities to thieves, Rahul has shown a pathetic and casteist mindset. However, his latest tirade is not surprising. For the last many years, he has always reduced levels of political discourse."

UK's security obligations not met: Jaishankar

We want action, not assurance: EAM; UK MPs slam Khalistanis for vandalismPIONEER NEWS
SERVICE/AGENCIES ■
NEW DELHI/LONDON

In the first high-level strong reaction by India to the attack on its High Commission in London by alleged Khalistan supporters, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Friday said it is the responsibility of that country to provide security and "these obligations were not met".

A day after UK Foreign Secretary James Cleverly condemned vandalism AT the Indian High Commission in London, the issue was raised in UK Parliament with MPs demanding action against "Khalistani hooligans". They also called for safety of India's diplomatic staff.

Taking exception to the attack on the Indian High Commission, Jaishankar when asked about the security of Indian Missions following vandalism in the UK said, "It is the obligation of the receiving country to provide security for a diplomat to do their work, to ensure embassy or High Commission's premises are respected. These obligations

were not met. We have had conversations with the British Government on this."

Jaishankar also said, "Many countries have a different view of their own security and a different view of other people's security. We will not accept this differential status." He made these observations at an event in Bengaluru.

Echoing similar views, Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Arindam Bagchi said here on Friday, "We hope host Governments provide full and adequate protection to our Missions and to the personnel working there...We are not interested in just assurances, I think we would like to see action."

He also said "at least in London and San Francisco, we have strongly taken up the matter of vandalism. You would have also seen the statements that we have put out in this regard. We expect that host Governments will take action to identify and prosecute all those involved and also take necessary actions to prevent the recurrence of such incidents."

CAPSULE

K'TAKA ABOLISHES 4% QUOTA FOR MINORITIES

Bengaluru: The Karnataka Government on Friday announced its decision to scrap the four per cent quota for minorities and added it to the existing quota of two dominant communities of the poll-bound State.

HC SETS ASIDE DELHI BJP MLA'S HOUSE BAN

New Delhi: The Delhi High Court on Friday set aside the one-year suspension of BJP MLA Vijender Gupta from the Delhi Legislative Assembly and permitted him to attend the remaining Budget Session of the Assembly while directing him to maintain the dignity of the House.

COVID RELIEF OVER, NOW SURRENDER, ORDERS SC

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Friday directed that all convicts and undertrial prisoners, who were released during the Covid-19 pandemic in a move to decongest jails, to surrender within 15 days.

TAXPAYERS WITH INCOME OVER ₹7L TO GET RELIEF

New Delhi: In a relief to taxpayers opting for new tax regime, individuals earning marginally higher income than no-tax ceiling of ₹7 lakh will pay tax only on the differential income after the Government amended the Finance Bill. The Finance Bill 2023, passed by the Lok Sabha on Friday, has proposed a marginal relief to taxpayers under new tax regime.

Mere membership of banned outfit makes persons criminal: SC



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In a significant verdict having wider ramifications, the Supreme Court on Friday reversed its 12-year-old verdict of two-judge bench and said that mere membership of a banned organisation will make a person criminal and liable to be prosecuted under provisions of UAPA.

The top court said its three verdicts of 2011 pronounced by two-judge benches, which held that mere membership of a banned organisation will not incriminate a person unless he resorts to violence or incites people to violence and does an act intended to create disorder or disturbance of public peace by resorting to violence, "is not a good law".

It restored Section 3(5) of the Terrorists and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act,

1987 and Section 10(a)(i) of the UAPA, 1967, which made the membership of a banned outfit an offence, liable to be punished with two years imprisonment along with fine.

A bench of Justice MR Shah, Justice CT Ravikumar and Justice Sanjay Karol allowed the petitions filed by the Centre and the Assam Government seeking a review of the three 2011 verdicts of the apex court on the ground that it will impact the sovereignty and integrity of the country.

"We hold that the view taken by this court in the cases of State of Kerala versus Raneef, Arup Bhuyan versus Union of India and Indra Das versus State of Assam (all 2011 verdicts) taking the view that under Section 3(5) of Terrorists and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act, 1987 and Section 10(a)(i) of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967... and reading down the said provisions to mean that over and above the membership of a banned organisation there must be an overt act and/or further criminal activities and adding the element of mens rea are held to be not a good law", it said.

Pak hecklers shown door at Kashmir event in US

PNS/ AGENCIES ■ NEW DELHI/
WASHINGTON

Scores of Pakistanis tried to disrupt a discussion on Kashmir in prestigious Washington DC National Press Club and some of them were later forcibly removed from the venue. The incident took place late on Thursday. The same day India slammed Pakistan for raising the issue of Kashmir in the United Human Rights Council (UNHCR).

Six separatist loyalists were forcibly removed from the National Press Club in Washington as Pakistanis tried to heckle and repeatedly interrupt the discussion in the Press club.

The panel discussion titled "Kashmir: From Turmoil to Transformation" was held on Thursday. It was moderated by columnist Se Hoon Kim and addressed by president of the

Jammu & Kashmir Workers Party Mir Junaid, and Touseef Raina, president of the Municipal Council of Baramulla.

"The whole audience has seen your real face today. What we have seen in Kashmir, we saw in Washington today, and thank you for showing the world how cruel, and indecent these people are. You have seen it all," Junaid said as the separatist sympathisers were taken out of the room.

They tried to disrupt the discussion while Junaid was responding to a question on the reasons why the Kashmiri Hurriyat leaders were in jail.

"They (Hurriyat leaders) are in jail because of their mistakes. They misled the people of Jammu & Kashmir for their vested interests and gains. They spoiled our ecosystem of education. They were the spoilers of our economy. They were

glorifying terrorism. They are in jail for their hate speech. They are in jail for their war crimes," Junaid said.

Referring to the disruption caused by the protesters, Raina said all these years this is what the separatists sponsored by Pakistan have been doing in Jammu & Kashmir.

"What these gentlemen did, the same thing they did in Kashmir. Whosoever was speaking, right, or for the people, was silenced by the gun," he said. "I wish I get a chance to visit Pakistan. I want to meet the policymakers to stop funding terrorism," said the Baramulla Municipal Council president.

45 Defence JVs with foreign firms OK'd for faster weapons production

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

With the objective of faster development and production of weapons to maintain operational readiness of the armed forces, the Government has given approval to "45 companies/joint ventures" operating in the defence sector with foreign OEMs (original equipment manufacturers).

Minister of State for Defence Ajay Bhatt informed this to the Lok Sabha on Friday.

The Centre has taken several policy initiatives in the past few years and brought reforms to encourage indigenous design, development and manufacture of defence equipment in the country, thereby reducing dependency on imports in coming years, he said.

"These initiatives, inter

alia, include according priority to procurement of capital items from domestic sources under Defence Acquisition Procedure (DAP)-2020; notification of three Positive Indigenisation Lists (PILs) by the Department of Defence Production (DDP), Ministry of Defence, with a timeline beyond which they will only be procured from the domestic industry," the Minister said.

India's first ropeway transport in Varanasi: Modi sets project in motion

'UP rising from hopelessness and moving towards hope, aspirations'

PNS ■ VARANASI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday gifted his parliamentary constituency, Varanasi, 28 projects — including the first of its kind 3.75-kilometre ropeway transport that will ease traffic congestion in the city.

He laid the foundation of Rs 645-crore ropeway project adding a new chapter in the history of public transport in India.

"The ropeway project will take the city's internal connectivity to a new level. It will further increase the economic opportunities as well as the stay of visitors and their spending here," Modi said while address-

ing a public meeting after laying the foundation stone of nine projects and inaugurating 19 development projects.

The ropeway will cover the distance between Varanasi Cantt Railway station and Kashi Vishwanath Dham in a few minutes. The ropeway system will have five stations and facilitate the ease of movement for tourists, pilgrims and residents.

The Prime Minister praised the the Yogi Adityanath Government for turning Uttar Pradesh from hopelessness towards a state of hope and aspiration "Uttar Pradesh is rising from hopelessness and moving towards hope and aspirations. Where security and



Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the 'One World TB Summit' at Rudraksh Convention Centre, in Varanasi, on Friday. Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath is also seen

facilities are made available, prosperity is certain," Modi said, appreciating the efforts of Yogi who completes the first year in office in his second term on Saturday.

During a programme at the Sampurnanand Sanskrit University ground here, Modi termed himself a "sewak (servant)" and said, "The development of Kashi is being discussed all over the country and the world."

"Whoever is coming to Kashi is taking new energy from here. Nine years ago, people had apprehensions that there would be no change in Banaras, nothing would happen in Kashi. But the people of Kashi proved every apprehension wrong with their hard work," he said.

"Today, in Kashi, both the old and the new forms are

simultaneously seen," he said. Modi added that people in India and abroad appreciated the development of the Kashi Vishwanath temple corridor and the Ganga ghat.

In the past one year, over seven crore tourists visited Varanasi and brought employment opportunities for the local residents, Modi said.

He also announced that a big campaign to promote natural farming would start on both sides of the Ganga. "A big campaign is going to start on both sides of the Ganga river. Natural farming will be encouraged on 5km on both sides. Arrangements have been made in the Budget for this," he said.

Modi also laid the foundation stone of a 55 MLD (million litres per day) sewage treatment plant at Bhagwanpur under the Namami Gange

scheme. The project will be built at an estimated cost of ₹300 crore.

Under the Khelo India scheme, Modi laid the foundation stone of the Phase 2 and Phase 3 redevelopment work of Sriga Stadium.

He also dedicated 19 drinking water schemes that will benefit over three lakh people in 63 panchayats under the Jal Jeevan Mission.

Earlier, while addressing the "One World TB Summit" on World TB Day, Modi said India's ideology of "Vasudev Kutumbakam" is giving the modern world an integrated vision and solutions.

Launching a series of initiatives to eliminate tuberculosis in India, Modi said the country is working to eliminate the disease by 2025 against the global target of 2030.

J&K lithium to make India top in EV making, says Gadkari

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Union Minister Nitin Gadkari on Friday said that if India can use recently discovered reserve of lithium in Jammu & Kashmir, it can become world's number one automobile manufacturer in electric vehicle segment.

The road, transport and highway minister said there is a need to encourage public transport, and electric buses are the future. "Every year, we import 1,200 tonnes of lithium. Now, in J&K, we got lithium. (If) we can use this lithium ion, we will be the number one automobile manufacturing country in the world," he said.

Sadar MLA not to participate in any programme of administration till Ramnavmi

SHAILESH SHARMA: HAZARIBAG

Hazaribag MLA Manish Jaiswal has decided not to participate in any programme of administration and Jharkhand government till Ramanvami. This decision was taken in protest of the restriction of DJ during the procession of Ramnavmi. The people, especially the youth of Jharkhand, have rejected the 60:40 employment scheme of the present government, he said.

Jaiswal organised a press conference at his Jhanda Chowk office on Friday evening. Regarding the State budget the MLA said that it is not a welfare budget. The State government promised in the Assembly that one kilogram pluses will be distributed to ration card holders in the 2022 budget, but even a single gram of pluses was not distributed till date.

He further said that the State government had promised to give Rs 50,000 extra money to beneficiaries of Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana in the last budget, but no one was benefited with the amount till date. The same situation is with employment.

The State government had promised to provide every year jobs to 5 lakhs unemployed youths, but only 237 youth get the job. This government has totally failed in the commitment.

Jaiswal further said that the present district administration is doing the work on the direction of the government.

State government to honour two Bokaro girls

PNS : BOKARO

Two Bokaro girls, Shreya Suman and Neha Kumari Bhagat, both students from Delhi Public School (DPS) in Bokaro, have been selected for the state merit award.

Both will be honored by Hemant Soren, Chief Minister, Jharkhand at Project Bhawan in Dhurwa, Ranchi, on 27 March.

Shreya Suman, the topper in Bokaro district and second at the state level in the CBSE 10th examination, will get a reward of Rs 2 lakhs, while Neha Kumari Bhagat, topper in the district and third in the state in the commerce stream of 12th board, will be honored



with a prize money of one lakh rupees. Sunil Kumar, Director of Secondary Education, Government of Jharkhand, has written a letter to the State Project Director of Jharkhand State Education Project Council, along with the list of selected toppers in this regard. In addition to CBSE toppers, Jharkhand Academic Council and ICSE board toppers will

BSL TOWN ADMINISTRATION SCRIPTS SUCCESS STORY IN CIVIC AMENITIES

R SHARMA : BOKARO

Bokaro Steel Management under the guidance of Director Incharge (DIC) BSL Amarendu Prakash, is making continuous efforts to improve the civic amenities of the township area and also with the recent inception of ED Personal RR Prasad Township infrastructure revival task definitely gets a boost. Basically Township revival mode is under prime action pertaining to the repair of main roads of townships, arrangement of LED lights in main roads and renovation of drainage system on war basis are going on with micro level monitoring

for the exponential improvement lead by CGM Township B.S Popli. It is noteworthy that last year the plan for comprehensive maintenance of the city's drainage system was targeted to be completed before this monsoon and the way work at ground level is in progress one can say that target is not far & if this gets done it would be truly a commendable job in terms of Township maintenance which this depleting city was waiting since long and existing Township team justifying by their round the clock tireless efforts in reinstating the lost glory and now this words can be heard from common man residing in this city as during interaction with Ram



Babu a 50 year old resident walking down the renovated street rather now happy street said "Seher ka gaurav

lout raha hai , Bokaro fir se chamak raha hai"

Drain work can be seen in progress in almost every sec-

tor of Bokaro where the objective is to clean all existing rainwater road side drain networks and culverts. Besides, 45 Km of roads are strengthened so far and another 45 km will be completed before monsoon. In parallel contract of 60km road mainly of Gandhi chowk to patharkatta, Kalibari road, BGH to Sector 9 hatia including all main roads of sectors is under the phase of finalization to strengthen the road networks throughout the township which is in depleted condition form seeking no revival actions since long and was sought for revival silently with obvious no choice. Also 7km of roads will be strengthen

through micro surfacing technique by next month of Bokaro Niwas road from patharkatta, Lake road and Road from BSL Administration building to Nayamore hence overall symbolising in true sense the meaning of Happy Street in Bokaro with no one day but all day . Taking step ahead on all improvements, renovation of much needed BSL operated school buildings including community centres are simultaneously under process which again were pleading for their restoration help. Notably the Electricity department of BSL was also involved in bringing radical changes and involved in various upliftment tasks.

BUREAU OF INDIAN STANDARD (BIS) WORKSHOP AT IIT-ISM

PANKAJ : DHANBAD

The Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS)organised a workshop on collaboration between IIT (ISM) Dhanbad here today. J Roy Chowdhury, former Deputy Director General and presently consultant, delivered a lecture on Need, benefits and the eco-system of Standards and Collaboration Opportunities with BIS.

Roy Chowdhury highlighted the evolution of BIS, the need for standards and their benefits. Other highlights of his presentation were on Standards National Action Plan (SNAP) with emphasis on drivers of future Standardization. Key Standardization areas/Subjects of future national standardization. He discussed the need of collaborations and opportunities for active participation of students, research scholars and faculty of IITs.

"We are the largest standardization organization of world" said Roy Chowdhury while giving details of certification of gold and silver jewellery of different jewellers from across the country being carried out by BIS.

Over the existing laboratories he said that BIS has eight laboratories of its own situated across the country while it has networking with over 550 other laboratories 287 of which are private laboratories engaged in testing work while others are laboratories of government organizations including laboratories of IITs.

Prof MK Singh, Dean of Student Welfare of IIT (ISM) who is also Director in Charge of the institute highlighted the legacy and achievements of the IIT(ISM) Dhanbad and thanked BIS for their collaboration and signing memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Institute.

Jamshedpur kids make the right moves

PARVINDER BHATIA : JAMSHEDPUR

Jamshedpur kids won the top laurels at the 22nd Jharkhand State Chess Championships 2023 held at Naman Vidya Hazaribagh.

In the under 7 Boys category , Ridhaan Goyal, son of Mridul & Manisha Goyal. Student of Loyola School aged 5yr 1 month won first prize. Second prize was won by Atharv Adesara, son of Nikhil and Vibhuti Adesara

Student of Loyola school aged 5 yr 4 months. The above players will represent Jharkhand at the National Chess Under 07 Open Chess Championships at Gurgaon from 20th-25th September 2023.

Atharv has achieved quite a bit in his short journey in chess.

Meanwhile, the young chess player thanked his mother and father for introducing him to chess. "We started playing with each other when I developed interest and I really started



liking the game. I would like to take the game seriously and bring laurels for my State," said Atharv. Atharv, who hopes to be like his idol, late American great Bobby Fischer aka Robert James Fischer, who became the youngest player to win the US Chess Championship at the age of 14. Besides Fischer, he admires Russian GM Garry Kasparov and Norwegian world champion Magnus Carlsen.

NOBA launches sanitary pad vending machine in Bokaro Schools



PNS : BOKARO

The global body of NOBA (Netarhat Old Boys Association) carries the banner of Netarhat and its value system through NOBA GSR (Global Social Responsibility). Notably this body aims to carry out various types of social work across the world under multiple dedicated wings. These wings will have several initiatives as per the needs of society, in their respective dedicated areas, such as health, education etc. In the same episode initiative has been designed and developed for the convenient availability of sanitary pads for girl students in Bokaro Schools. NOBA GSR inaugurated sanitary pad vending machine (with Insinerator) in various schools under the tag line "When Sangini is with you, then why worry about periods" the schools echoed with

the voices of girls reiterating the tagline enthusiastically and why not as their worries are over now as Periods will no longer be a hindrance for them and that too at a very nominal cost. Bokaro NOBA Coordinator Avinash Kumar Jha (DGM, BSL) phrased entire event being Netarhat Alumni "These initiatives are only the result of our Netarhat's glorious tradition which bind us to our values, ethics, and work"

At (Bokaro Ispat Sr Secondary School) BISSS-2C campus formal inauguration with launch of sanitary pad vending machine was concluded by cutting ribbons in the presence of Regional Manager of SBI Kaushik Kumar, NOBA Coordinator Avinash Kumar Jha, Meenum Mishra BSL(GM/Education) and NOBA members Vashistha Narayan Singh(Ex-GM/BSL), GN Shahoo, Ex-

Director (M&HS) and SN Jha Ex-DGM . Notably this machine is also installed at BISSS 8B, Bokaro Steel Balika Vidyalaya-9B , Bokaro Ispat Kalyan Vidyalaya-Sector 3D and Mithila Academy Public School Sector4,B . During the launch GM/BSL Meenum Mishra said that with this launch there would be significant increase the attendance of girls in schools. Further DGM Avinash Jha said that this initiative started by NOBA GSR is a commendable work. This initiative will help a lot of the girl students studying during periods . Also under the joint aegis of NOBA GSR's 'Sangini' campaign this sanitary pads are available in the state of Bihar and Jharkhand in about 400 villages. DGM BSL Jha while thanking all in making the event successful specially thanked SBI Bank who contributed a lot in this event and members of NOBA (GSR) OP Chaudhary , Vikas Ranjan and Rama Niwas for their efforts in giving "Sangini" a new height .

Finally Members of NOBA, thanking everyone, said this kind of initiative will help us to reach the needy in all possible fields and provide them with a path to flourish and grow together.

Central Sarna Committee take out grand procession of Sarhul



VINOD PRASAD L OHARDAGA

Under the auspices of the Central Sarna Committee Lohardaga, a grand procession of Sarhul, the great festival of nature, was taken out on Friday from the local Jhakhra Kuban after offering prayers by Pahan Pujar. Which passes through Maneka Road, Bada Talab, Thana Toli, Shastri Chowk, Gudri Bazar, Mahavir Chowk, Rana Chowk, Mission Chowk, Barwatoli, Shukra Bazar, Alka Cinema Hall, New Road, Powerganj Chowk, Court Road and the main roads of the city. By reaching the District Collectorate Road Maina Bagicha, the fair turned into a function. Other organizations including Adivasi Chhatra Sangh, Sarna Prathna Sabha, Raji Padha participated in the procession. In the Sarhul Shobhayatra, the tribals

danced fiercely with their costumes and drums, men and women. On this occasion Manokamna Siddhi Durga Mandir Trust Varvatoli distributed Pushpa Varsha Sharbat, drinking water and gram to welcome the procession, apart from this, Kendriya Mahaveer Mandal and various social religious and political organizations welcomed by setting up stalls and Chana Gur Sharbat was given. Prior to this, worship was performed by the Pahan Pujar in the local Jhakhra Kuban and wished for happiness and prosperity. The district administration appeared prepared for the Sarhul festival procession. In the procession Yatra mainly Manni Oraon, President of Central Sarna Committee Raghu Oraon, Rohit Oraon, son of Minister cum MLA Dr. Rameshwar Oraon, Sukher Bhagat, Nishit Jaiswal, Suraj Aggarwal, Sandeep Kumar, Manir Oraon, Sudhir Oraon, Arvind Oraon, Lakshmi Apart from Narayan Bhagat, Rajkumar Verma Om Gupta, Ramesh Oraon, Rajeev Ranjan alias Pappu, thousands of people of Sarna Sanatan were present.

Sand on cart for sale in Daltonganj

M F AHMAD : DALTONGANJ

A new trade in sand mining has begun in Daltonganj. Although it is low key and of mini scale nevertheless the sand mining goes on openly in the town. The modus operandi is simple. Four labourers pull their wooden hand cart on the bank of the river Koel.

The wooden cart is parked and the 4 just go into the knee deep river the Koel. There the 4 dig the sand with bare hands. The dug up sand is then packed in the empty cement bag. Half bag is only filled with sand. Each such bag is sold for 10 to 12 rupees. One wooden hand cart carries 24 to 26 sand filled bags. It is then wheeled by 2 of the 4 labourers. One from the front and the other from the rear. This sand is not sold like any other items which are sold here on wooden hand carts like fruits, ready made garments, shoes, vegetables etc. The sand reaches the destination (read construction site) straightaway where 24 or 26 sand bags are sold at the rate of rupees 10 or 12 each.

The town police know it well as to how a new technique has been evolved for sand min-



ing. Unscrupulous cops are greased by these sand diggers. As sandbags are water soaked the wooden hand cart gets heavily loaded. One sand digger said "Each of 4 earns 400 to 500 hundred rupees a day. Our job is too hard. Digging sand by hand and then packing it in the cement bag is very tiring work but we do as there is no other option." "We do not annoy the police. We give them money otherwise they will deflate the tyres of the wheels of the cart which is driven manually," said the digger. On being asked if the wooden hand driven cart is theirs to which this sand digger said "We hire it on a daily basis for rupees 100 from 8 in the morning till 4 in the evening. The wear and tear of the cart is our responsibility." The flash point of such sand mining is at the Chitragupt Mandir NawaToli Daltonganj. The local residents do not object to it.

Prayer meeting in memory of Madhuri Dixit's mother

PNS : JAMSHEDPUR

City-based famous fan of Bollywood actress Madhuri Dixit, Pappu Sardar, paid tribute to her mother Snehlata Dixit by organising a prayer meeting and a 'Shradh Bhoj' at Cheshire Home in Sundernagar.

Tributes were paid with moist eyes by offering flowers to Snehlata Dixit. Those gathered prayed for the peace of the departed soul. Special children from Cheshire Home, sisters, women from nearby villages and transgender also participated in the prayer meeting. This prayer meeting was organised by Pappu Sardar, popularly known as the fan of Bollywood actress Madhuri Dixit.

Pappu also paid rich tribute expressing deep condolences. On the occasion, Pappu said that Snehlata Dixit had passed away on the same day at the cremation ground in Worli that's why he could not attend the funeral. " As Madhuri's brother, I have done my duty today in this hour of grief. Madhuri was very close to her mother. She celebrated her mother's 90th birthday in the month of June last year. Snehlata Dixit will always be in our memories," said the ardent fan. Sister Daisy, managing director of Cheshire Home, village lady Sumi and Paro said that different events organised by Pappu Sardar in the name of Madhuri Dixit bring happiness to the special children living here. Today, in this hour of sorrow, all the children here are also sad. More than 150 people attended the prayer meeting. They also participated in 'Shradh Bhoj'.

Tiranga Yatra in honor of Nation turns out to be historic

PNS : JAMSHEDPUR

City's leading social organization Naman paid tribute to the martyrs of the country's brave sons Bhagat Singh, Rajguru, Sukhdev by taking out a grand tricolor yatra under the leadership of founder president Amarpreet Singh Kale on the martyrdom day. In this journey, the city's intellectuals, a large number of mother power and thousands of youth took the tricolor in their hands and registered their huge presence with the slogans of Bharat Mata Ki Jai, Vande Mataram. The yatra was started by showing the tricolor to Maa Bharti's chariot from the meeting place. In the program, all the members of the ex-servicemen family were honored by giving shawls. The responsibility of conducting the program was taken over by the ex-servicemen family. The tricolor was hoisted on three white horses at the front of the journey, behind it was the chariot of Maa Bharti. In other tableaux, the three brave martyrs were depicted kiss-



ing the gallows. On the one hand, the whole city was being decorated with the pride and glory of the tricolor, and on the other hand, Bharat Mata Ki Jai, Vande Mataram ki Jai, the whole atmosphere was resonating, along with the patriots involved in the yatra, as well as among the people standing to welcome the yatra. Seeing the rising enthusiasm, the people welcomed this yatra with great enthusiasm. During the visit, Bhalubasa Shopkeepers Association, Rajak Samaj, Jambu Akhara Samiti, Mukhi Samaj, Prajapati Samaj,

Vishwakarma Samaj, Ganda Samaj, Ramliia Utsav Samiti, Vicky Furniture, Neelkanth Seva Sangh, Gausia Langar Samiti, Vegetable Vendor Association, Marwari Yuva Manch, Marwari Samaj, Sakchi Shopkeepers Association, Suhagan, Jhanda Chowk Footpath Association, Tempu Stand Association, National Electronic, Paigame Aman, Payal Tax, Gurunanak Market and Gurunanak Jewellers, Sahu Samaj, Punjabi Samaj, Central Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee, Naujawan Sabha, Ho Samaj, Turi Samaj, Manokamna Mandir, Sakchi

Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee, All India Sikh Student Federation, Kalimati Shopkeepers Association, Telugu Samaj, Kashidhi Shopkeepers Association, Chappan Bhog, Gangaur, Gambhir Tires, Jamshedpur Transport Welfare Association, Khajan Singh Sidhu, Refugee Colony Gurdwara Pradhan Harminder Singh Minda, Krishna Mandir Refugee Colony, Banga Bhashi Samaj, Permanent Employees Association, Baba Vadbhag Singh Seva Dal, Golmuri Chowk Bajrang Akhara Samiti and other organizations received Mother Bharti by setting up a service camp and paid his obeisances.

Mahant Vidyandand Saraswati, Jamshedpur East MLA Saryu Rai, Patna Sahib Gurdwara Management Committee General Secretary Sardar Inderjit Singh,INTUC leader Rakeshwar Pandey, AJSU leader Chandragupt Singh, Kshatriya Samaj Shambhunath Singh, senior Congress leader Ramashray Prasad, Tata Workers Union President Gurmeet Singh Tote, General Secretary R. Of

Singh, social worker Shiv Shankar Singh, senior Congress leader Vijay Khan, Mr. Nattu Jha, senior journalist Brij Bhushan Singh, senior BJP senior leader Shailendra Singh, former BJP district president Chandrashekhhar Mishra, former district president Rajkumar Srivastava, Vijay Khan, Ajay Singh, social worker development Singh, Sakchi Gurudwara Pradhan Nishan Singh, Subodh Srivastava of Jantantra Morcha, Ramnarayan Sharma, labor leader Sanjeev Srivastava, social worker and Satnam Singh Gambhir of All India Sikh Student Federations and other dignitaries of dozens of religious and social organizations of the city were present.

On this occasion, Saryu Rai said that such initiatives give strength to fight against anti-national disruptive forces and there can be no better platform than this to understand the meaning of this freedom gained after martyrdom, when the youth of the country are celebrating the tricolor. For pride and pride, when one stands above caste, religion, sect,

high-low and parties, then such a tsunami of patriotism is visible. This effort of the Naman family under the leadership of Amarpreet Singh Kale is incomparable and truly a tribute is eligible.

Mahant Vidyandand Saraswati said that this is the grandest event to be organized in India for the martyrs and to keep their martyrdom and cultural ideas intact. Tribute to the spirit of the family for patriotism.

On this occasion, founder Amarpreet Singh Kale expressed his gratitude to the people present and said that in 2016, when the anti-national forces were trying to weaken India, the Naman family in Lohanagari broke their misconceptions and illusions with the Akhand Tiranga Yatra. Gave a befitting reply and warned that whenever the anti-national forces will try to spread darkness by attacking the integrity of the nation, then the Naman family will give a befitting reply to their nefarious intentions by lighting the torch of patriotism with the light of unity and integrity.

CM ANNOUNCES MULTI-STOREY HOSTELS FOR TRIBAL BOYS AND GIRLS

Participates in Sarhul Puja at Tribal Hostel, Siram Toli

PNS : RANCHI

Everywhere there is an atmosphere of joy, enthusiasm and celebration. Mandar- beat of drums and trembling steps, worshipping nature with complete rituals in Sarna places. In fact, this tradition, which has been going on for centuries, tells how important the nature festival Sarhul is in the tribal society. Sarhul is not just a festival. It is a symbol of connection with nature," said Chief Minister Hemant Soren at the Sarhul Festival at Tribal Hostel, Karamtoli here on Friday. On this occasion, he played Mandar after traditional rituals at Sarna Sthal.

On this occasion, the CM said that the government has decided to provide well-equipped and necessary facilities to the hostels. The renovation work of the hostels has also started. In this episode, an action plan has been chalked out to give a new dimension to the tribal hostel. Separate multi-storey hostels for boys and girls will be built here, where there will be complete arrangements for living of 500 boys and 500 girls studying. He announced plans to renovate the Science and Arts Block of Ranchi Women's College.



Chief Minister Hemant Soren performs rituals during Sarhul festival in Ranchi on Friday. PNS

The CM said that Sarna and Masna places are related to the faith of the tribals. The government is working towards preserving it. He told the people that the society will also have to fulfill its responsibility in keeping the social heritage intact. With the efforts of the government and your contribution, we can give a different identity to our socio-religious heritage.

There is water-forest-land, only then we exist. If we are not able to preserve nature then the coming generation will have to face many big problems. In such a situation, we all have to come forward to stop tampering with nature, said Soren, while addressing the Sarhul Mahotsav organized by the Sirmtoli Sarna Samiti. He said that there is a need to make collective efforts in this direction to keep the cities green like the villages.

On this occasion, the CM prayed for the happiness, prosperity, progress and prosperity of the people of the state by offering prayers with full rituals at Sarna Sthal.

The CM said that Sarhul festival on one hand connects us with nature and on the other hand gives us a pleasant feeling of our rich tradition



Chief Minister Hemant Soren beats a traditional Mandar to celebrate Sarhul festival in Ranchi on Friday. Pix by Ratan Lal

and culture. This is the reason why tribal societies have been following the tradition of nature worship for years.

The CM said that in today's materialistic era, the challenges are also coming up according to the speed with which our needs are increasing. Its direct effect is being read on our natural system. If you can't strike a balance between your needs and challenges, then you have to be ready to face the consequences. In such a situation, it is necessary that it is impossible to return what we are getting from the lap of nature, but by planting trees and saving trees, we can contribute something towards nature. The Chief Minister also asked the people to come forward to save the rivers, streams and mountains along with the forest.

Sarhul gives message of man-nature relationship: Guv



Governor CP Radhakrishnan performs rituals during "Sarhul Puja Mahotsav" at Tribal and Regional Languages, Ranchi University in Ranchi on Friday.PNS

PNS : RANCHI

Governor CP Radhakrishnan today said that the tribes have a glorious history. Their civilization and culture is very rich. Along with this, the art-culture, literature, tradition and customs of our tribes have worldwide recognition. They are nature lovers and this is reflected in their festivals and rituals. Congratulating the people of the state on Sarhul festival, he said that Sarhul is not just a festival, but a unique example of the unbreakable relationship between human life and nature. Sarhul gives the message that man does not exist without nature.

The Governor was addressing the people at the "Sarhul Puja Mahotsav" organised by the Faculty of Tribal and Regional Languages, Ranchi University, Ranchi today. On the above occasion, Mayor, Ranchi Dr. Asha Lakra, Secretary, Vikas Bharti Ashok Bhagat, Vice Chancellor, Ranchi University, Ranchi Prof. Ajit Kumar Sinha along with teachers, officers and students of the university were present.

The Governor said that in today's modern era where the whole world is worried about global warming, the importance of such festivals increases even more. This festival inspires humans for the protection and promotion of nature. Highlighting the importance of trees, he said that "It is impossible to imagine life without trees, if there is a tree then there is life". Water level has increased significantly and rainfall has also increased. He said that Jharkhand state would be invited to benefit from the



Governor CP Radhakrishnan beat a traditional Dhol during "Sarhul Puja Mahotsav" at Tribal and Regional Languages, Ranchi University in Ranchi on Friday.PNS

experience of the said organization in the field of tree plantation. He appealed to the

people of the state to conserve water and plant more and more trees.

State Congress office was donated by Modi Family: BJP

Law is equal for all, you reap what you sow: Prakash

PNS : RANCHI

Taking a dig at the Congress party, the State BJP unit today launched a scathing attack against Rahul Gandhi saying that he deserved for what he said. Bokaro MLA Biranchi Narayan today organised a press conference with city based businessman Pradeep Modi, who claimed that even the Jharkhand Pradesh Congress Committee's State office at Shradhdhanand Road in Ranchi was donated by his family.

Biranchi said that Pradeep Modi's Grandfather Shivanarayan Modi, who was a devout Congressman, had donated the building to the Congress party. Pradeep Modi said that his grandfather had reached Ranchi in 1868 and he was treasurer of the Congress in Ranchi. In 1942



when he was in Hazaribag jail, he bought a house at Shradhdhanand Road and donated it to the Congress party. Modi, who has also filed a defamation suit against Rahul Gandhi, demanded a speedy trial of the case in Ranchi.

Meanwhile, BJP State President and Member of Parliament Deepak Prakash welcomed the decision of Lok Sabha Speaker to terminate the membership of senior Congress leader and former Wayanad MP Rahul Gandhi. Prakash said that the law is equal for everyone in the

country and whether it is a king or a rank, one will pay for what he does.

He said that Rahul Gandhi has become used to speaking unparliamentary language, making unlimited comments. He considers himself above India's constitution, democratic system, dignity and traditions. He had openly called people with Modi surname as thieves, against whom BJP MLA from Gujarat and former minister Purnesh Modi had filed a case against Rahul Gandhi. He said that there is a provision of termination of membership in the law on conviction of two years or above which is applicable to all. It is said that Rahul Gandhi had to apologize in the Supreme Court for making the remark that Chowkidar Chor Hai, but he did not rectify his conduct.

CALLING A THIEF, A THIEF HAS BECOME CRIME IN COUNTRY NOW: CONGRESS

PNS : RANCHI

Jharkhand Pradesh Congress Committee President Rajesh Thakur said that it is a direct murder of democracy on the cancellation of the membership of former All India Congress Committee President Rahul Gandhi. Now, calling a thief a thief has become a crime in this country. Fugitive thieves and robbers are roaming around carelessly and those who raise their voice against them are being punished. Thakur said that today all the government machinery is under pressure. This is the beginning of the end of dictatorship. This decision is shocking and condemnable. Such haste has never happened before in the parliamentary politics of India. Rahul Gandhi should not speak against Adani. He is being prevented from speaking even in the House, so we are doing the work of speaking on the road.



membership was taken in a hurry, why the JPC was not constituted. Friends of the Prime Minister are looting public money. Instead of taking action against him, the Prime Minister wants to eliminate the voice that is speaking against her friend.

We respect the court, we are with Rahul, we will struggle from the road to the house and the voice of the people will continue to be strong.

Meanwhile, former minister and member of the coordination committee of the Jharkhand government and working president of the Jharkhand Pradesh Congress Committee, Bandhu Tirkey today said that the cancellation of Lok Sabha membership of Rahul Gandhi and his disqualification for the election, as a whole, will affect the Bharatiya Janata Party. That's part of the backdoor emergency imposition. He said that the real face of the Bharatiya Janata Party and the Narendra Modi government has come to the fore from today's developments.

Describing the cancellation of Rahul Gandhi's Lok Sabha membership as a blow to democracy, Tirkey said that the public will never accept it. He said that the Congress, its leaders and workers are against corruption and unwanted industrial

ists in the interest of the general public and talk against them only. Tirkey said that the central government has put all its machinery behind the opposition and this is a conspiracy to suppress the voice of the opposition. But it will never get success in a vibrant democracy like India.

Tirkey said that the Congress and the Congressmen have made the supreme sacrifice in the Indian freedom struggle and will not back down from any sacrifice to save democracy in the country. Appealing to everyone to come together, Tirkey said that all the Congressmen will unitedly reveal the anti-democratic face of the Bharatiya Janata Party to the general public and tell the general public about the party's ideology and policies. He said that the Congress will never stop, nor will it stop, and with the coming time, the Congress movement will intensify even more. Along with this, the campaign against corruption will continue in any case.



Former Minister, Member of the Coordination Committee of Jharkhand Government and Working President of Jharkhand Pradesh Congress Committee, Bandhu Tirkey met Congress General Secretary cum Jharkhand in-charge Avinash Pandey presents a bouquet made of Sarai flowers on the occasion of Pratikriti Parv Sarhul, in New Delhi on Thursday. PNS

IN BRIEFS

Samastipur Division sets record for maximum scrap sale in a single day

BY setting a record in scrap sale on 23.03.2023, Samastipur Division has established a new record of maximum scrap sale in a single day as compared to the sale made so far. In one day on 23.03.2023, Samastipur Division earned revenue of Rs 4.72 crores from the sale of scrap. While about 9500 tonnes of scrap was disposed of by the Samastipur division till March 23 of the current financial year, which earned the division a revenue of Rs 42.81 crores. With this Samastipur division has crossed the target set for scrap sale. The date of next e-auction for scrap sale has been fixed as 31.03.2023.

Sanjay Tyagi participates in Sarhul festival



Sarhul is the new year celebration of the tribes of Jharkhand, Odisha and Chhattisgarh. Notably tribal communities rejoice and celebrate this cultural festival with a lot of enthusiasm. In the same episode Bokaro MLA representative Sanjay Tyagi, who participated in the Sarhul Festival organized at Sarna Samiti Balidih 43 more, said that the Sarhul festival protects the environment from contamination by preserving it. This festival is the festival of taking a pledge to protect trees and plants. It is a festival related to nature.

Rahul’s case echoes in UN



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI/UNITED NATIONS

A verdict sentencing Congress leader Rahul Gandhi to jail for two years echoed in the United Nations (UN) and it said the international body was aware of it.

When asked whether UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres was “worried about democracy” in India, Farhan Haq, deputy spokesperson for Secretary General, said late on Thursday, “I can say we’re aware of the reports regarding

the case of Rahul Gandhi. We understand that his party does plan to appeal the decision. That’s as much as I can say on that at this stage.”

Rahul was sentenced to two years in jail on Thursday by a Surat court in a 2019 criminal defamation case over his “Modi surname” remark.

He took to Twitter to give his initial reaction by quoting Mahatma Gandhi in Hindi. “My religion is based on truth and non-violence. Truth is my God, non-violence, the means to get it. — Mahatma Gandhi,” he tweeted.

String of initiatives launched to eliminate TB by 2025 in India

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI/VARANASI

Asserting that “it’s difficult to accomplish new outcomes with old approaches,” Prime Minister Narendra Modi on World TB Day on Friday launched a string of innovative initiatives like TB-Mukt Panchayat, official pan-India rollout of a shorter TB Preventive Treatment and Family-centric care model for TB.

He said this would help India achieve TB elimination target by 2025, five years ahead of the global stipulated time.

The Prime Minister said the new initiatives to fight against the bacterial infection is in addition to a multi-pronged approach being already followed, including measures to enhance nutrition, increase people’s participation, treatment innovation, integration of technologies and disease prevention through programmes like Fit India, Yoga and Khelo India.

“These could become the



global model for ending TB...” he said.

Under ‘TB Mukta Panchayat’ members of the local bodies are sensitised and trained about the disease, with them aiding the government’s implementation of the programme and achieving TB free status while the nation-wide rollout of a 3-month preventive treatment for those at risk of developing TB aims to reduce the course of treatment from the previous six months and replace the daily pills with a once-a-week medicine regimen.

Stating that 80 per cent of TB medicines are made in India, Modi lauded the role

played by the pharma industry and said it is a big strength to the world’s fight against TB. “I wish that fruits of each and every endeavour of India, campaign of India, innovation of India reach to the whole world...as we are committed towards the Global Good!,” he said at an event organised by the Union Health Ministry along with the Stop TB Partnership organisation..

The Prime Minister credited people’s participation for the great work that India has done in the fight against Tuberculosis. After the government’s appeal, about 10 lakh TB patients were adopted across

the country by people, including children of 10 to 12 years of age. Financial help to a TB patient under the programme has reached up to one thousand crore rupees.

“This addresses the challenge of nutrition for TB patients along with the government’s direct benefit transfer scheme started for TB patients in 2018. Approximately Rs 2,000 crore have been directly transferred into their bank accounts for their treatment, with 75 lakh TB patients benefiting from this. “Ni-kshay Mitras have now become a new source of energy for all TB patients,” he said.

The Prime Minister also drew the world’s attention to the integration of technology in the programme, with the Ni-kshay portal that can track all those with an active infection. He also said that ICMR has developed a new method for sub-national disease surveillance that has made India, apart from the WHO, the only country to have this kind of model.

Houses adjourned again amid uproar



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The deadlock to the Parliament’s second-leg of the Budget session is unlikely to be found before the end of the second-leg of the Budget session on April 6 as both the Houses were again adjourned for the day amidst heavy uproar even while the Lok Sabha managed to pass the Finance Bill with the Opposition members trooping into the well and shouting slogans “Modi-Adani Bhai Bhai”.

The battle-lines have turned sharper as the Congress member from Waynad, Kerala, Rahul Gandhi has been disqualified from his Lok Sabha member-

ship following his conviction by a Surat court.

Slogans like “Modi-Adani Bhai Bhai” and “We want JPC” raised by the opposition when the house resumed its proceedings at 1200 after being adjourned in the morning.

The Finance Bill, 2023 ‘tabled by Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in Lok Sabha saw its passage amid heavy noise by Opposition MPs demanding a JPC inquiry into the Adani Group issue. The ruling party members too sought apology from Rahul for his comments against the Indian democracy

Delhi Police registers case in violence at Indian High Commission in London

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Taking note of the incidents of violence targeting the Indian High Commission in London on Sunday last, the Delhi Police has registered a case in connection with the protest.

The case was registered by the special cell under the Indian Penal Code, Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act and the Prevention of Damage to Public Property Act as it involves unlawful activities carried out by certain people holding Indian nationality abroad, a senior police officer said here on Friday.

It was done after the Ministry of Home Affairs directed the Delhi Police to take appropriate legal action on the receipt of a report from the Ministry of External Affairs over the incident at the Indian High Commission March 19.



Last Sunday, the tricolour flying atop the Indian High Commission in London was grabbed at by a group of protesters waving separatist Khalistani flags and chanting pro-Khalistani slogans, leading to an arrest related to the violent disorder.

Officials from the mission said “attempted but failed” attack had been foiled and that the tricolour was now flying “grander”. The Metropolitan Police said two members of security staff sustained minor

injuries which did not require hospital treatment. An investigation has been launched.

India on last Sunday night summoned the British deputy high commissioner and demanded an explanation over the complete “absence of security”. In a strongly-worded statement, the Ministry of External Affairs said India finds “unacceptable” the indifference of the UK government to the security of Indian diplomatic premises and personnel in the UK.

‘Financial help being provided to States, UTs for promotion of film tourism’

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Tourism issued guidelines in 2012 for extending financial support to state governments and Union territory administrations for promotion of film tourism, and a financial assistance of up to Rs 2 lakh per film is provided under it, the government has informed a parliamentary panel.

This was mentioned in a report on ‘Action Taken by the Government on the Recommendations/Observations of the Committee contained in its Three Hundred Twenty Sixth Report on the subject ‘Role of Indian Missions Globally for the growth of Tourism in India’ tabled in Lok Sabha on Friday.

The committee in its report has also said that it had observed that many of the tourist spots and places of religious importance are located near the national highways

yet the state of the last-mile connectivity from the national highways to the tourist spot “leaves much to be desired”.

“The Committee feels that good quality last-mile connectivity is important to ensure a positive experience for tourists visiting a tourist destination in the country, which in turn, helps attract more tourists through word-of-mouth publicity.

“The Committee therefore recommends that the ministry may examine the state/quality of last mile connectivity roads at all such tourist spots near the National Highways at the earliest and ensure their construction and maintenance with the concerned Ministries/agencies to make the tourist places more accessible to tourists, both domestic and international, which will invariably increase the number of tourists visiting such places,” the panel had observed.

Rahul may have to vacate bungalow unless higher court stays conviction, say experts

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Friday stood disqualified from contesting Lok Sabha and Assembly elections for eight years unless a higher court stays his conviction, an expert on electoral laws said.

Now following his disqualification as an MP, Rahul Gandhi may have to vacate his official bungalow in Lutyens’ Delhi within a month if he does not get relief from a higher court in the criminal defamation case, an official said on Friday. Rahul Gandhi was allotted the 12, Tughlaq Lane bungalow after his election as a Lok Sabha MP in 2004.

“As he has been disqualified from Lok Sabha, he is not entitled to a government accommodation. According to rules, he will have to vacate his official bungalow within a month since the date of dis-



qualification order,” an official of the Union Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry said.

Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra had to vacate her official Lodhi Estate bungalow in July 2020 as she was no longer eligible for it after her security cover had been downgraded.

This was Rahul Gandhi’s fourth Lok Sabha term. First elected to Lok Sabha in 2004 from Amethi, he represented that constituency for two more terms. In 2019, he lost the Amethi seat to Smriti Irani but managed to win from Wayanad.

Incidentally, the Congress-led UPA government, in 2013, had attempted to circumvent a Supreme Court ruling to set aside an RP Act provision under which a person sentenced to imprisonment of two years or more shall be disqualified “from the date of such conviction” and remain disqualified for another six years after serving time. Rahul Gandhi himself had opposed the ordinance at that time and tore the ordinance in a press conference as a token of protest.

Rahul Gandhi is the second member of Lok Sabha, after Lakshadweep MP P P Mohammed Faisal of the Nationalist Congress Party, to have been disqualified in the recent past following conviction. The Kavaratti sessions court in Lakshadweep had sentenced four persons, including Mohammed Faizal to 10 years in jail after they were found guilty in an attempt-to-murder case.

Def Min signs contract with BEL for ‘Project Himshakti’

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

In a boost to indigenous production of weapon systems, Ministry of Defence on Friday signed a contract with Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL), Hyderabad for procurement of two Integrated Electronic Warfare Systems ‘Project Himshakti’ at an overall cost of approximately Rs 3,000 crore.

Giving details of the contract, officials said here the project is under the Buy (Indian – IDMM) (Indigenously Designed Developed and

Manufactured)) category comprising contemporary and niche technologies.

‘Project Himshakti’ will encourage participation of Indian electronics and associated industries, including MSMEs, which are sub vendors of the BEL. It will generate employment of approximately three lakh man-days over a period of two years. The project is a significant leap forward in developing indigenous capabilities making the country ‘Aatmanirbhar’, in consonance with the Make-in-India initiative of the government.

SC directs convicts released during Covid emergency to surrender in 15 days

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday directed that all convicts and undertrial prisoners, who were released during the COVID-19 pandemic in a move to decongest jails, to surrender within 15 days. A bench of Justices MR Shah and CT Ravikumar said undertrial prisoners, who were released on emergency bail during the pandemic, can move for regular bail before competent courts after their surrender.

US pick for WB, Banga, cancels India meetings after tests Covid +

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Indian origin US nominee for World Bank president Ajay Banga, scheduled to meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman here has tested positive for Covid-19. Hence, his meetings to take place on March 23 and 24 were cancelled.

According to a Finance Ministry statement, Banga’s meeting with Nirmala Sitharaman would not happen as he is in quarantine.

“During routine testing, Ajay Banga tested positive for COVID-19 but remains asymp-



tomatic. In adherence with local guidelines, he is quarantining in isolation,” the statement said.

Besides meeting with the Union finance minister, Banga was scheduled to meet Prime Minister Modi and External Affairs Minister Jaishankar and top officials during his two-day visit.

Banga’s New Delhi visit is the final stop on his three-week

global tour that began in Africa before progressing to Europe, Latin America, and Asia to drum up support for his candidature for the World Bank’s top position.

In a statement on Wednesday, the US Treasury Department had said, “While in India, Banga will meet with Prime Minister Narendra Modi as well as the Minister of Finance Nirmala Sitharaman and the Minister of External Affairs S Jaishankar.

“These discussions will focus on India’s development priorities, the World Bank, and global economic development challenges,” it said.

Banga’s New Delhi visit was the final stop on his three-week

global tour that began in Africa before progressing to Europe, Latin America, and Asia to drum up support for his candidature for the World Bank’s top position.

India endorsed Banga’s candidacy soon after his nomination was announced in February. Since then, a diverse coalition of governments has expressed their support for Banga, including Bangladesh, Côte d’Ivoire, Colombia, Egypt, France, Germany, Ghana, Italy, Japan, Kenya, Saudi Arabia, the Republic of Korea, and the United Kingdom.

During his global listening tour, Banga met with senior government officials, stakeholders, business leaders, entre-

preneurs, and civil society.

Along the way, he built continuous momentum for his candidacy, gaining the support of advocates, academics, development experts, executives, Nobel Laureates, and former government officials.

If elected to serve, Banga will draw from his experience living and working in emerging markets and his expertise in forging public-private partnerships to mobilise investments and action to confront long standing challenges.

That includes his efforts at Mastercard to successfully bring 500 million previously unbanked people into the digital economy, as well as its support for 50 million small businesses.

NIA chargesheets gangsters, criminals linked with pro-Khalistani terror outfits

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Friday filed a chargesheet against notorious gangsters/criminals, Lawrence Bishnoi and Goldy Brar, along with 12 others having links with the proscribed Babbar Khalsa International (BKI) and several other pro-Khalistani terrorist outfits, in the second of the three terror-gangster nexus cases it is investigating. The latest action takes the total number of accused chargesheeted by the NIA so far in these cases to 26.

The chargesheet has exposed the linkages between members of criminal syndicates and drug smugglers with BKI and pro-khalistani outfits.

Lawrence Bishnoi, in custody since 2015, has been operating his terror-crime syndicate from jails in different States, along with Canada-based Goldy Brar, who is an accused in the killing of Pradeep Kumar, a Dera Sacha Sauda follower, in Faridkot in November 2022.



The Lawrence Bishnoi terror-crime-extortion syndicate was also responsible for providing killers for the RPG attack case on Punjab State Intelligence HQs (headquarters) at Mohali, which was carried out on directions of Harwinder Singh alia Rinda, a Pakistan-based BKI terrorist, NIA investigations have revealed, the NIA alleged.

Goldy Brar was found to have direct links with Lakhbir Singh alias Landa, another BKI operative working closely with Rinda, as revealed in NIA investigations so far, it said.

Lakhbir Singh is also an accused in the Mohali RPG

attack, as well as the December 2022 RPG (rocket propelled grenade) attack on Police Station Sirhali in Tarn Taran, Punjab.

Investigations against Landa and three others are continuing. “All the 14 accused have been charged with criminal conspiracy to unleash a wave of terror and carry out targeted killings of well-known social and religious leaders, movie stars, singers and businessmen,” the NIA said in a statement.

Besides having links with conspirators in Pakistan, the accused were also in contact with pro-Khalistani elements based in Canada, Nepal and other countries, NIA investigations have further revealed.

NIA has seized a huge cache of nine illegal and sophisticated weapons, 14 magazines, 298 rounds of ammunition and 183 digital devices and other incriminating material in raids across 74 locations in Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Chandigarh and Delhi in the case.

ED attaches ₹252.17 cr property in PMLA case

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has attached immovable property in the form of commercial asset Ambience Tower at Shalimar Bagh locality here worth Rs 252.17 crore belonging to Ambience Towers Pvt. Ltd, a company of Ambience Group, promoted by Raj Singh Gehlot in connection with a money laundering investigation.

The ED initiated Investigation on the basis of an FIR and subsequent chargesheet filed by Anti-Corruption Bureau, Jammu and Kashmir under the Provisions of Ranbir Penal Code and Prevention of Corruption Samvat Act.

PMLA investigation revealed that Aman Hospitality Pvt. Ltd through its promoter director Raj Singh Gehlot was sanctioned a term loan facility of Rs 810



crore by a consortium of Banks led by J&K Bank to part finance its hotel project in Shahdara, Delhi.

The loan amount later turned into a non-performing asset (NPA). “During investigation, it was revealed that Raj Singh Gehlot had diverted loan funds and layered the same through a web of bank accounts belonging to his relatives and Ambience Group companies. In addition to

diversion of funds, it was also found that Raj Singh Gehlot had diverted materials to the other project sites of Ambience Group,” the ED said in a statement.

In line with the probe findings, Gehlot was arrested on July 28, 2021. His wife, Sheela Gehlot and other directors of Ambience Group Companies, Amit Gehlot, Shamsher Singh and Pawan Singh were arraigned as accused in the Prosecution Complaints (chargesheets in police parlance) filed by the ED.

The ED has already filed Prosecution Complaints dated September 24, 2021 and November 17, 2022 in the present case before the PMLA Court, Patiala House Courts here for commission of money laundering offences.

The PMLA court took cognizance through its order dated September 27, 2021 and November 30, 2022.

Ayush Min, Def Min ink pact to integrate Ayurveda in ECHS Polyclinics



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Union Ministry of Ayush and Department of ex-servicemen Welfare/ECHS under Union Ministry of Defence on Friday inked a pact to integrate Ayurveda in ECHS Polyclinics as an OPD service for five years period. These will be established at 10 polyclinics based at Ambala, Mysore, Ranchi, Nagpur, Bhopal, Bhuvaneshwar, Chennai, Meerut, Danapur, and Allepey (Alappuzha).

Ayurveda centres are already in place in 37 cantonment Hospitals, 12 military hospitals of AFMC and Ayurveda OPD in AH R&R,

AF Hospital Hindan and five ECHS polyclinics. The MoU was signed by Dr Manoj Nesari, Adviser (Ayurveda) on behalf of the Ayush Ministry and Maj Gen NR Indurkar, Ex-servicemen Contributory Health Scheme on behalf of the Defence Ministry.

According to this MoU, Ayush Ministry will provide technical guidance from time to time and will empanel Ayurveda doctors and pharmacists for their engagement and provide list of essential Ayurveda medicines and any other technical support as may be required while the Defence Ministry will provide logistic and locations in the respective polyclinics.

AFSPA extended in parts of Arunachal, Nagaland

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Union Home Ministry on Friday extended for six months the ‘disturbed area’ status in parts of Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland under the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958.

According to two separate notifications, the decisions have been taken after review of the law-and-order situation in both the states. The AFSPA gives armed forces personnel, operating in disturbed areas, sweeping powers to search, arrest, and to open fire if they deem it necessary for ‘maintenance of public order’.

The home ministry said the central government in exercise of the powers conferred by Section 3 of the AFSPA 1958 (28 of 1958) had declared the Tirap, Changlang and Longding districts in Arunachal Pradesh and the areas falling within the jurisdiction of Namsai and Mahadevpur police stations in Namsai district of Arunachal Pradesh, bordering the state of Assam as ‘disturbed area’ on September 30, 2022.

One more police station



area has been brought under the ambit of the AFSPA through the fresh notification.

“And whereas a further review of the law and order situation in the state of Arunachal Pradesh has been undertaken. Now, therefore, Tirap, Changlang and Longding districts in Arunachal Pradesh and the areas falling within the jurisdiction of Namsai, Mahadevpur and Chowkham police stations in Namsai district of Arunachal Pradesh, bordering the state of Assam, are declared as ‘disturbed area’ under Section 3 of the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958 for a period of six months with effect from April 1, 2023, unless withdrawn earlier,” one of the notifications said.

In the other notification, the home ministry said the central government in exercise of the powers conferred by Section 3 of the AFSPA, 1958 (28 of 1958) had declared nine districts and 16 police stations in four other districts of Nagaland as ‘disturbed area’ for a period of six months with effect from October 1, 2022. It said, now, the disturbed area status will be applicable in eight districts and 21 police stations areas falling under five other districts.

“And whereas a further review of the law and order situation in the state of Nagaland has been undertaken. Now, therefore, Dimapur, Nuland, Chumoukedima, Mon, Kiphire, Noklak, Phek and Peren districts in Nagaland and the areas in Nagaland falling within the jurisdiction of i) Khuzama, Kohima North, Kohima South, Zubza and Kezocha police stations in Kohima District; ii) Mangkolemba, Mokochung-I, Longtho, Tuli, Longchem and Anaki C’ police stations in Mokochung District... are declared as ‘disturbed area,’ the notification said.

RAHUL’S DISQUALIFICATION FROM LS Opp leaders main target in Modi’s new India: Didi

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Days after calling Rahul Gandhi the “biggest asset” and “biggest TRP” of the BJP, Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Friday took a turn this time slamming the Narendra Modi Government for getting the tallest Congress leader disqualified from the Lok Sabha in a defamation case.

Moments after Gandhi’s disqualification from the House, Banerjee said the Opposition leaders were the main target of in the new India led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

While Bengal Opposition parties—save the BJP—would not exhibit much of enthusiasm over Banerjee’s statement saying she was more concerned about the rising popularity of “Under PM Modi’s New India, Opposition leaders have become the prime target of BJP” Banerjee who is also the president of Trinamool Congress wrote in her Twitter post. Condemning the kind of treatment meted out to the Congress leader she said



West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee speaks during a meeting, in Kolkata, on Friday PTI Photo

“Today, we have witnessed a new low for our constitutional democracy.” Attacking the BJP government for pursuing double standards she said while on one side saffron leaders with criminal records were made ministers and on the other leaders of the opposition parties were made victims of political speeches. She said, “While BJP leaders with criminal antecedents are inducted into the cabinet, Opposition leaders are disqualified for their speeches.”

Her nephew and TMC National general secretary Abhishek Banerjee wrote that “Democracy” in today’s India sounded oxymoronic. Though

he would not refer to the Rahul Gandhi issue he wrote, “Democratic India is an oxymoron now.” TMC MP Shantanu Sen called it a “black day” wondering whether BR Ambedkar would have relished such a huge drop in Indian democratic standards today.

“This is a Black day for the Indian democracy. Had the father of our Constitution BR Ambedkar been alive he would have literally cried,” Sen said wondering “how a ruling party with such a brute majority in Parliament can stoop such low to script such a dirty game.” Gandhi was disqualified from being a Member of Lok Sabha hours after he was sentenced to two years of imprisonment by a Surat court in a caste defamation case.

The Left too, hit out at BJP government for its “vindictive attitude” saying “plot to disqualify Gandhi was hatched divert attention from burning issues like corruption, unemployment” etc. Reacting sharply on issue senior counsel and CPI(M) MP Bikash Ranjan Bhattacharya said.

Cambodia mountain to be home to Indian tigers

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

A technical committee comprising officials from the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) and Wildlife Institute of India (WII) is on the job to advise their counterparts in Cambodia to help them execute dreams of bringing Indian big cats in their land under the world’s first ambitious translational tiger programme conceived last year.

On its part, Cambodia has already identified 90 acres of forest land at its Tatai wildlife sanctuary in the Cardamom Mountain to be the home to the Indian tigers whenever they arrive.

SP Yadav, Head of the NTCA told *The Pioneer*, “We have constituted a technical support group which is advising Cambodia to achieve certain levels of standards with respect to staffing, prey base, habitat and protection. Once these are achieved, further action will be taken.”

He said hence it is too early to talk about the numbers of big cats proposed to be shifted to Cambodia. No tiger has been spotted in Cambodian forests for the last 15 years. The



last picture of a tiger was taken in the eastern highlands of Cambodia in 2007. The country is now committed to have the tigers, which is included in the IUCN Red List of Endangered Species, back to its forests.

Though Yadav was non-committal when the translocation will happen, Cambodia is pinning hopes that the tigers may arrive by the year-end, as has also been stated by Suwantha Gauntlett, founder and CEO of Wildlife Alliance, as per reports.

Officials in the Union Environment Ministry said that before the Indian big cats lands on the foreign land, it is necessary that ground and field works be done to ensure they are safe and get the conducive environment to settle down properly to make the translocation successful in the long term.

4 yrs ordeal of 5 Indian sailors jailed in Iran ends

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

In an emotional homecoming, five Indian sailors — who had been arrested, jailed, acquitted and grounded after they were stranded in Iran in June 2019, returned home on Friday after suffering four years of ordeal.

The five sailors — Aniket S. Yenpure (31), Mandar M. Worlikar (28), both of whom are from Mumbai, Pranav A. Tiwari (23) from Patna, Naveen M. Singh (30) from New Delhi and Thamizh R. Selvan (33) from

Chennai — appeared overwhelmed as they bowed and touched the Indian soil after they arrived at the city airport from Iran by an Iran Air Tehran-Mumbai flight this afternoon.

The sailors were accorded a moving reception by their relatives and friends, who cheered vociferously, hugged and lifted them in the air and celebrated the quintet who shed tears of happiness. “We have never been so happy as we are today. Nearly 45 months of nightmare has

ended today. We underwent lots of hardships like being arrested, thrown into jails there, fighting legal battles, getting acquitted and obtaining necessary permissions to fly back to India.

Finally we are back in a country to which we belong,” Aniket Yenpure said. “For the next one month, we will rest and be with our families,” Yenpure said. Naveen (New Delhi), Tiwari (Bihar) and Selvan (Tamil Nadu) will stay with Mumbai-based Yenpure and Worlikar for the next few days,

before returning to their home cities. Aniket thanked the Indian Embassy in Tehran which arranged for the emergency travel papers and air tickets for him and his fellow sailors and also a few Iranian lawyers who fought their case for more than six months and got them released from the jail and ensured their return to India. “The authorities in Iran seized our passports and Continuous Discharge Certificate (CDC)-cum-Seafarer’s Identity document.

Water warriors to be honoured

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

At least 50 water warriors from across the States and various walks of life will be felicitated on March 29 at an event here for their works in water conservation, harvesting, rejuvenation, restoration of water bodies and water crisis management among others aimed to save the precious item.

At the Jal Prharh Samman Samaroh 2023, one water saviour each from states like Delhi,

Bihar, Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Chattisgarh, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu, Jharkhand, Punjab, Tripura, Odisha, Tamil Nadu, Telangana etc. and two water saviour each from Haryana, Karnataka, Uttarakhand have been selected for the honour, said a statement here.

Union Jal Shakti Minister, Gajendra Singh, Union Minister of state for Jal Shakti, Prahlad Patel and MPs Manoj Tiwari and Unmesh Patil will be present as chief guests on the

occasion.

Along with them ambassadors of many countries including Netherland, Finland, Malta, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan will be present to grace the occasion.

Convenor of the ceremony, Anil Singh said that the National Water Mission, UNOPS, CWC are the participants of the programme and Jal Prharis include many schools, colleges, universities, district officials, non govt organisations and private institutions.

The ceremony is being held under the joint aegis of Jal Shakti Ministry, Jal Jeevan Mission, Chief Operating officer of the programme, Ameya Sathe said, adding that that 11 water conservationist from Uttar Pradesh, 8 from Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh and 10 water conservationist from Maharashtra will be honoured.

India has 18 per cent of the world’s population, but only 4 percent of its water resources, making it among the most water-stressed in the world.

Probe defamation plea filed by Union Min against Raj CM, court directs Delhi Police

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi court on Friday directed the Delhi Police to probe the criminal defamation complaint filed by Union Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat against Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot over his remarks on the alleged Sanjivani co-operative scam.

Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Harjeet Singh Jaspal directed the Joint Commissioner of Police concerned to “investigate the matter either himself or through an officer not below the rank of an Inspector” and file the investigation report on April 25.

“...Keeping in mind the facts and circumstances and also keeping in mind the legislative mandate...(considering the fact that the accused is residing outside the local jurisdiction of this court), this court directs an investigation into the matter, through Delhi Police. Keeping in mind the sensitivity of matter, it is directed that Joint Commissioner concerned shall monitor investigation,” the judge said. The judge further said that investigation should endeavour to find answers to three questions —whether complainant Shekhawat was



addressed as “an accused” in the Sanjivani scam by accused Gehlot, whether Gehlot stated that the allegations against Shekhawat stand proved in the Sanjivani scam and whether Shekhawat or his family members have been arrayed as “an accused” in investigation of the scam. Union Jal Shakti Minister Shekhawat had filed complaint on March 4. The complaint alleged that Gehlot, a senior Congress leader, defamed the BJP leader by alleging his role in the scam.

“There is irreparable damage caused to his (Shekhawat) reputation,” the complaint claimed. The complaint alleged that Gehlot has been making defamatory remarks, trying to tarnish Shekhawat’s image and affect his political career. In Sanjivani Credit Cooperative Society Ltd, thousands of investors allegedly lost Rs 900 crore. Rajasthan Police’s Special Operations Group (SOG) has been investigating case since August 2019.

Thieves, scamsters running freely while Rahul punished: Uddhav

TN ■ RAGHUNATHA MUMBAI

The Opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) on Friday dubbed the disqualification of Congress leader Rahul Gandhi as a Lok Sabha member, as a “murder of democracy” and said that “it’s now a crime to call a thief a thief” in the country. The Lok Sabha Secretariat’s decision to issue a notice to Gandhi disqualifying him an MP a day after he was convicted and sentenced to two years in jail in a defamation case evoked strong reaction from the MVA constituents in the state — Congress, NCP and Shiv Sena who said that the Congress leader is being punished for “exposing” the Narendra Modi government.

Maharashtra’s former chief minister and Shiv Sena (UBT) president Uddhav Thackeray said Gandhi’s disqualification as an MP was nothing but a “a murder of democracy” “It’s a crime to call even a thief a thief in the country,” Uddhav said.

“The thieves and scamsters are running around freely while Rahul Gandhi has been punished for calling a thief a thief... This is a blatant murder of democracy. All institutions are



under pressure. Whatever is happening of the is beginning of end of democracy in the country. We need to take our fight against the Modi government to a new level to restore democracy in country,” Uddhav said.

Coming down heavily on Lok Sabha Secretariat’s decision over Gandhi’s disqualification, NCP chief Sharad Pawar tweeted, “The disqualification of Mr Rahul Gandhi and Mr Faizal a few months ago as MP’s of Lok Sabha are against the basic tenets of the constitution, where democratic values are being curtailed. This is condemnable and against the very principles on which the constitution is based.”

“Our Constitution guarantees right of each Individual to fair justice; liberty of thought; equality of status and opportunity and fraternity assuring dignity of each Indian,” Pawar added.

Corrupt Cong wants to make K’taka its ATM, fill coffers, alleges Shah

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Union Home and Cooperation Minister Amit Shah on Friday said the Congress is degenerating across the country, and has now set its eyes on Karnataka to make the state its ATM and fill its coffers at the national level.

Speaking in the poll-bound State, he appealed to people of Karnataka not to give a “half and incomplete government”, and to form a BJP government with full majority and thereby strengthen the hands of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai.

“Congress party is degenerating across the country, the Congress people don’t have any state with them that can fill the Congress’ central treasury, they want an ATM.... They want Karnataka to become Congress’ ATM, and the corrupt Congress’ eyes are now set



Union Home Minister Amit Shah during the foundation laying ceremony of Sahakar Samridhhi Soudha and the inauguration of various development works of the Department of Cooperation (Karnataka), in Bengaluru, on Friday PTI Photo

on Karnataka,” Shah said. Addressing a beneficiaries’ meet organised by Karnataka Cooperative department and other departments, he asked people whether they will form a BJP government under Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s leadership in Karnataka or a

Congress government with Rahul Gandhi at the helm. “Wherever the Congress has formed the government, their history is corruption, humiliation of Dalits, OBCs and Adivasis, and strengthening anti-national forces,” he alleged. Bommai, veteran BJP leader B

S Yediyurappa, Karnataka Co-operation Minister S T Somashekar among others were present at the event.

Highlighting that the Modi government banned Popular Font of India (PFI), Shah said, “Siddaramaiah’s Congress government (earlier), used to withdraw cases against PFI, but Narendra Modi government by banning PFI has secured the entire South India, and also the entire country.” Claiming credit for the construction of Ram Mandir in Ayodhya, he said, the Congress party was “delaying, obstructing and misleading” for 70 years, but Modi has laid the foundation for the temple and it will be ready very soon.

He also said that PM Modi, by abrogating Article 370, has put a bridle on terrorism in the entire country. “Modi’s mission is to make the entire country prosperous, take forward every state including Karnataka.”

2-day Gaj Utsav from April 9

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

India’s two mega and important conservation focused projects involving tiger and elephants are completing their 50th and 30th years of existence respectively this year which the Government has plans to celebrate with much fan-fare next month.

President Droupadi Murmu will inaugurate a two-day “Gaj Utsav” on April 9 in Assam’s Kaziranga National Park to commemorate the successful completion of 30 years of Project Elephant while Prime Minister Narendra Modi will launch a three-day mega event on April 7 in Mysuru in Karnataka to mark the completion of 50 years of Project



Tiger and showcase India’s tiger conservation success globally, officials said on Friday. The Prime Minister will also release the latest tiger census data, the government’s vision for tiger conservation during ‘Amrit Kaal’ and a commemorative coin, said S P Yadav, member secretary, National Tiger

Conservation Authority (NTCA). India launched Project Tiger on April 1, 1973 to promote tiger conservation. Initially, it covered nine tiger reserves spread over 18,278 sq km. At present, India has 53 tiger reserves covering more than 75,000 sq km (approximately 2.4 per cent of the country’s geographical area) of tiger habitat.

With a current population of about 3,000 tigers, India is home to more than 70 per cent of the global wild tiger population and their number is increasing at six per cent per annum. The tiger reserves are repositories for biodiversity conservation in the country. These ensure regional water security and carbon sequestration and thus contribute in

accomplishing India’s climate change mitigation targets. Similarly, ‘Gaj Utsav’ a two-day event to commemorate Project Elephant which was launched in 1991-92 as a centrally-sponsored scheme to protect elephants, their habitat and corridors, prevent human-elephant conflict and to ensure the welfare of captive elephants in India, will be inaugurated by the President at Kaziranga National Park on April 9, Minister of State for Environment Ashwani Choubey told reporters here.

Elephant is a national heritage animal protected under Schedule I of the Wild Life Protection Act, 1972. India accounts for more than 60 per cent of the global wild elephant population.

CBI arrests Joint DGFT in bribery

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The CBI on Friday arrested a Joint DGFT of Directorate General of Foreign Trade for allegedly accepting a bribe of Rs 5 lakh.

The Central Bureau of Investigation has arrested a Joint DGFT, Directorate General of Foreign Trade, Rajkot (Gujarat) for demanding and accepting a bribe of Rs Five Lakh from the Complainant,” the agency said in a statement.

The CBI arrested Jawri Mal Bishnoi, Joint DGFT in the corruption case, officials said. A case was registered against the officials on the allegations of demanding undue advantage to the tune of Rs 9 lakh from the complainant.

It was further alleged that complainant had submitted six files containing all required documents of periodical export of food cans to DGFT, Rajkot to issue no objection certificate (NOC) so as to release their bank guarantee of around Rs 50 lakh.

SC to hear Opp parties plea over misuse of CBI, ED

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday agreed to list for hearing on April 5 a plea by 14 opposition parties, led by the Congress, alleging arbitrary use of central probe agencies against political opponents.

A bench headed by Chief Justice DY Chandrachud took note of the submissions of senior advocate Abhishek Singhvi, appearing for the Opposition parties, and said the plea would be taken up for hearing on April 5.

“I am asking for the guidelines for the future. This is a remarkable convergence of 14 parties against the misuse of the agencies, both CBI and ED,” Singhvi said, and claimed that 95 per cent cases of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and the Enforcement Directorate (ED) are against the leaders of opposition. The senior lawyer referred to the rise in the number of cases filed



by the CBI and ED after the NDA government came to power in 2014. “Second statistics, pre-2014 and post-2014. There is a humongous jump in cases. The rate of conviction is four to five per cent. We are asking for pre-arrest guidelines and post-arrest bail guidelines,” Singhvi said.

Sources close to the deliberations which led to the filing of the common plea by 14 political parties said Delhi Chief Minister and AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal played an important role in persuading other opposition leaders for moving the top court jointly.

The plea alleged there is an alarming rise in the use of coercive criminal processes against opposition political leaders and other citizens exercising their fundamental right to dissent.

“Investigating agencies such as CBI and ED are being increasingly deployed in a selective and targeted manner with a view to completely crush political dissent and upend the fundamental premises of a representative democracy,” a statement issued on behalf of a petitioner alleged.

The plea filed through lawyer Shadan Farasat cited some statistics and said they demonstrated a “shocking and unconstitutional state of affairs”.

Besides the Congress, other parties who are part of the joint move are the DMK, RJD, BRS, Trinamool Congress, AAP, NCP, Shiv Sena (UBT), JMM, JD(U), CPI(M), CPI, Samajwadi Party and the J&K National Conference, the statement said.

www.dailypioneer.com
facebook.com/dailypioneer | @TheDailyPioneer | instagram.com/dailypioneer/
PAPER WITH PASSION

Inconsistent

ONDC is making a foray into the city transport sector but its very existence is problematic

Open Network Digital Commerce (ONDC) has entered the city transport sector by tying up with a Bengaluru-based ride-hailing company. The objective is to check the market dominance of aggregators like Uber and Ola. ONDC, a Government-run protocol on the lines of UPI, is also reportedly negotiating with more companies in the sector in several other cities. While well-intended, there are fundamental flaws in the idea of ONDC. When it was launched in September last year, it was claimed that it would check the monopoly of global e-commerce giants like Amazon and Walmart. "After UPI, another game changing idea to democratise commerce - ONDC soft launch today to select consumers, sellers and logistics providers. Get ready for a world of choice, convenience and transparency," Commerce & Industry Piyush Goyal tweeted the day ONDC was launched. But isn't checking monopolistic practices the duty of the Competition Commission of India (CCI)? The Competition Act, 2002, was passed by Parliament in 2002, to which the President accorded assent in January 2003. It was subsequently amended by the Competition (Amendment) Act, 2007. In accordance with the provisions of the Amendment Act, the Competition Commission of India and the Competition Appellate Tribunal were established. The CCI is now fully functional with a Chairperson and six members, according to the CCI's website. The provisions of the Competition Act relating to anti-competitive agreements and abuse of dominant position were notified on May 20, 2009.

"It is the statutory duty of the Commission to eliminate practices having adverse effect on competition, promote and sustain competition, protect the interests of consumers and ensure freedom of trade carried on by other participants, in markets in India as provided in the Preamble as well as Section 18 of the Act," says the CCI website. The commission is also mandated to give its opinion on competition issues to government or statutory authority and to undertake competition advocacy for creating awareness of competition law, it adds. Against this backdrop, the very idea of the Ministry of Commerce & Industry setting up a body for the same purpose is duplication of work. Besides, it also militates against the principle Prime Minister Narendra Modi has stated more than once: the government has no business to be in business. It is in pursuance of this principle that the Government has been privatising public sector undertakings. But, by launching ONDC, the Ministry of Commerce & Industry will be ensuring government interference in the economy — something that is not in tune with the Modi Government reformist agenda. On the face of it, ONDC's new forays may seem impressive but in reality these don't appear to be consistent with the newly emerging policy framework. Instead of zealously promoting ONDC, the Ministry of Commerce & Industry should focus on boosting manufacturing.



Women in traditional dresses celebrate Zangtri as part of three-day Navreh (Kashmiri New Year) festival

Are you contributing to electronic waste?

E-waste is a growing concern not only in India but also globally. With the launch of newer devices, our greed leads us to buy the latest ones

Christian Lous Lange says "technology is an effective servant but a dangerous master". There is no denying everyone is addicted to technology in some way or another. Everyone has seen the transition from a wired telephone to the first cell phones followed by the latest, lighter and better version of cell phones. However, have we ever thought that today's technology will be obsolete someday? Today, technology has affected almost every aspect from advancements in education, medicine or transport to easy access to socialization, food, healthcare and productivity. Every year, big tech companies come up with new versions of their devices. This leads to the market to shift to its updated version. As a result, many individuals replace their phones or gadgets with new ones, causing a lot of E-waste. Today, almost 10 billion people have smartphones, and in 3-4 years without access to repair these devices will add to an enormous amount of e-waste that already exists. Though buying latest gadgets keeps an individual



updated, in the long run their constant use will affect our planet's health severely. According to a research, India is the 3rd largest E-waste producer after China and the USA. E-waste or electronic waste is the fastest growing waste stream in the world. It includes discarded electronic devices such as mobile phones, tablets, notepads, computers, radios and televisions. Computer devices account for nearly 70% of e-waste, followed by the telecom sector, medical equipment and electrical equipment. Unfortunately, these devices end up in landfills, where they release hazardous gases into the atmosphere. The toxic components so released affect human health in terms of skin irritation, lung infections, kidney problems, nausea and others. They also contribute to soil contamination, polluting the envi-

ronment and most importantly harm and threat to wildlife. According to a recent study, E-waste has reached alarming levels with 5.3 billion phones thrown away every year. Since the last 5 years, waste has grown by 21% and is expected to reach 74.2 MT by 2030. If not recycled or disposed of properly, heavy metals in e-waste emit toxic substances causing serious environmental concern. At the individual level, there are several solutions that can help reduce e-waste such as considering repairing a smartphone instead of buying a new one or preferring to donate old devices such as laptops, computers or notepads to schools or charitable organisations that can find a use for the product. Educating high-school students about e-waste's harmful effects has a greater impact on stopping its spread. Adopting changes in technology such as cloud computing and the internet of things can even help with dematerialization. In India, many e-waste recycling startups such as Cashify, Attero recycling, Namo E-waste, Binbag and many more have come up

with the objective of conserving resources by adopting economical and responsible disposal techniques of e-waste. These startups are working day and night to create opportunities to transfer waste into socially and industrially beneficial raw materials such as valuable metals, plastics and glass. They are using simple, cost-efficient and environmentally friendly technologies suitable for Indian conditions. As climate change effects grow, it becomes the responsibility of its citizens to help the planet and prevent e-waste issues. Also, with the 5G revolution, it is imperative to recycle old smartphones. It is important to understand that a difference can only be made at the individual level. E-waste is a growing concern not only in India but also globally, as the moment electronic devices get introduced, an individual's greed leads them to buy the latest one while the old ones take space in the cupboard drawers. We need a safe channel for recycling obsolete equipment. (The writer is a teacher at a reputed school in Delhi)



SAKSHI SETHI

Myanmar nightmare continues unabated

It's been more than two years since the coup, yet the low-intensity civil war raging on in our neighbouring country is set to last for a long time

More than two years have passed since the coup in Myanmar on February 1, 2021, which prevented the elected members of the National League for Democracy, which had won 396 seats out of 476 in the Lower House of Parliament in the country's November 2020 elections, from assuming office. The junta that perpetrated the coup arrested Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, NLD-leader and iconic symbol of the country's struggle for democracy, and leaders of her party. It unleashed a vicious repression campaign.

The Government continues to face growing countrywide resistance with murderous violence. Volker Türk, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, told the 52nd session of the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva on March 6, 2023, that, overall, the military's airstrikes against civilian locations increased by 141 per cent in the second year of its takeover, and its shelling of communities, including hospitals schools and places of worship, by over 100 per cent. During the same period, incidents in which homes and neighbourhoods were set on fire rose by 380 per percent. This led to an estimated 1,200 per cent increase in the number of homes destroyed. He further stated that reports continued to be received daily, particularly from the Sagaing region, north-west of Mandalay, of ongoing incidents, with soldiers reportedly moving from village to village, looting and setting fire to homes and farms.

Türk cited his UN colleagues as saying 39,000 structures had been burned in villages and towns by the military since the coup. Overall, credible sources verified that at least 2,947 civilians, including 244 children, had been massacred by the military and its affiliates during this period. More than one third of these confirmed deaths occurred in military custody. The actual number of civilians killed is far higher. He further said that, besides those killed in military or police action, detainees across Myanmar had reported severe beatings; mock executions; suspension from ceilings without food or



water; electrocution; and acts of sexual violence as well as squalid detention conditions.

The question is, how long will Myanmar groan under the Tatmadaw's—as Myanmar's army is called—iron heel? Despite the savagery of the generals' repression, the country, to all appearances, is slipping out of their control. Ranged against them is the National Unity Government (NUG) formed by some NLD leaders, activists and representatives of several insurgent ethnic organisations and minor parties, on April 16, 2021. Its armed wing, the People's Defence Force (PDF), was established on May 5, 2021. According to a report by Richard R Paddock in *The New York Times* of 6 June, 2022, it had a total strength of 60,000. As indicated by the latest reports, it now comprises 300 battalions with over 250,000 soldiers.

A report in Mizzima (A Burmese multi-media news organization) on September 9, 2022, cites a brief by SAC-M, released on September 5, 2022, as saying that the military does not effectively control the country, and is incapable of governing it. According to

“THE QUESTION IS, HOW LONG WILL MYANMAR GROAN UNDER THE TATMADAW'S — AS MYANMAR'S ARMY IS CALLED — IRON HEEL?”

the report, the National Unity Government (NUG) is the legitimate government of Myanmar and is at the centre of a democratic revolution shaped by organisations opposed to Myanmar's military junta. These organisations are the de facto authorities over more of Myanmar's population and territory than the junta, which has stable control over only 72 out of the country's 330 townships, which comes to only 17 per cent of Myanmar's land area, because many are small urban townships. In an article published on September 29, 2022, in *The Interpreter*, brought out daily by the Lowy Institute, an Australia-based independent think tank, Adam Simpson cites a report by the SAC-M, saying that the NUG and ethnic resistance organisations effectively controlled over 52 per cent of Myanmar's territory. Twenty-three per cent were contested and the junta dominated 17 per cent.

The Tatmadaw suffered from low morale and desertion. The latter rate has fallen recently because of tough action to curb it. Tatmadaw's other weaknesses remain. Its weaponry is more suitable for

conventional warfare than anti-guerrilla operations; its younger generation lacks combat experience. On the other hand, the People's Defence Force lacks numerical strength besides heavy artillery, tanks, and aircraft. This is essential for winning large battles in the plains.

What seems likely in the foreseeable future is a stalemate, with the Junta controlling the capital Nay Pyi Taw and some other towns and strips of territory and the NUG and the armed forces of the ethnic minorities controlling the rest. The Junta is being attacked even in townships where the Tatmadaw is present, and may lose control over them. That it is apprehensive and struggling to hold on to these is clear from the imposition of martial law in 37 newly formed towns on February 2 and three more on February 22, bringing the total number of townships under martial law to 50 out of 330. Even these moves may not help. It is difficult to reverse the flow when the tide turns against you.

(The author is Consulting Editor, *The Pioneer*. The views expressed are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

KANGAROOS HAVE A STRONG TAIL

Sir — Australians have come through a difficult phase and defeated Team India in their own den. This is a very rare occasion as we count on home wins in series after series. Team India struggled to tackle pace in the first two outings and succumbed to spin in the decider and won the series. The writing is on the wall in the ODI world cup this year. This is the second time India has lost a bilateral ODI series against Australia. And what's in common between their 3-2 loss in 2019 and the 2-1 defeat in this series is the fact that the Men in Blue were ahead on both occasions.

They led the 2019 series 2-0 before losing three in a row. Rohit Sharma and coach Rahul Dravid have a lot of work to do as they aim to regain the trophy later this year. For now, the Aussies will relish regaining the top spot in the ODI rankings. They will also fly back home with the ODI series trophy as a consolation after losing out on the Border-Gavaskar Trophy earlier in the trip. For Australia, the tail wagged, the spin did the trick and Aussie batsmen pulled up their socks to make a match of it.

CK Subramaniam | Mumbai

LEAST PAINFUL DEATH PENALTY?

Sir — What is the most efficient method of death penalty enforcement? The Supreme Court sparked such a debate by asking the government to hold a discussion on the issue on Tuesday. However, this is a complicated issue because determining the method of capital punishment is considered the responsibility of the legislature rather than the judiciary. Perhaps therefore the Supreme Court has stated unequivocally that it will not issue an order addressing the method of applying the death penalty. However, this question is necessary to determine whether the current method of imposing a death sentence meets legal and constitutional requirements. The current hanging method was last upheld by the Supreme Court in 1983, but the issue must be revisited considering scientific and technological advances since then. This need is confirmed when



Blessing in disguise

Rahul Gandhi's conviction in the defamation case can prove blessings in disguise to strengthen democracy. Rahul Gandhi was convicted in a defamation case by the Surat court and sentenced to two years' punishment. Bail was also granted to appeal in the upper court. Rahul Gandhi's conviction can strengthen Indian democracy. Just a few days ago Congress spokesperson also uttered unwanted words against Modi and had to approach the supreme court for bail. With Rahul Gandhi's conviction in the 2024 Parliament elections no unhealthy

we look at the situation in other countries around the world.

Whether the current hanging process is considered the least painful or any other method after considering all aspects—the principle of dignity of death is bound to be vindicated. If another method is found to be superior, the current method will be ruled unconstitutional. The revised method can then be ratified by the legislature. In today's era, when the discussion of direct encounters with criminals appears to be gaining traction in our country for a variety of reasons, it is expected that the apex court's initiative will make us more aware of justice criteria.

Abhijit Roy | Jamshedpur

HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT

Sir — The US State Department releases its annual Human Rights Report every year. In those countries, human rights are violated indiscriminately. If the names of those countries are mentioned in this report even after evidence of human rights violations, will those countries accept those strong

language will be used and electioneering will be pleasant without filthy language. This will automatically strengthen the democratic structure of the country.

At present, there is pandemonium in both houses of the parliament due to undesirable utterances by Rahul on foreign land. The ruling party demands an apology from Rahul. It is expected that Rahul Gandhi will learn a lesson from this conviction. This is the first time that Rahul has been convicted for the first time, but he is habitual of using undesirable and unwanted language. In the last election, his slogan "Chowkidar chor hai" became very famous and was directed at Modi. In the last Parliament elections, he had to apologise before the supreme court for misinterpretation of supreme court orders. Let us hope that Rahul Gandhi's conviction may prove a blessing in disguise to strengthen democracy in India.

Yash Pal Rathna | Jalandhar

allegations? They will reject outright and say that America has no right to interfere in our internal affairs. As India will now bluntly tell the US State Department. Because in the just-released report, it has been said for India that there are 'cases of human rights abuses and people from minority communities, critics of the government and journalists are targeted'.

In Monday's report, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said he was closely monitoring developments in India "including increasing human rights abuses in the country" in the presence of Foreign Minister S Jaishankar and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh. There is no need to look for distant events. A day after the publication of this report, Kannada actor Chetan Kumar was arrested for a tweet criticising a Hindu nationalist ideology. Therefore, the US State Department's allegation has some substance.

Jang Bahadur Singh | Jamshedpur

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

NOW THE GOVT DECIDES WHAT WE EAT

Unlike the days of yore, Govts need to incentivise crops which suit modern life



In the early human civilisations, it was geography and weather that decided what crops were to be grown in any region. The same crop was consumed by the people of that area. Exports were tough and risky. But, in modern civilisation, Governments directly or indirectly control the food consumed.

Government subsidies are offered in various ways. It can be direct transfers to farmers by cash transfer (DBT) or by providing them with subsidized electricity, water, diesel, pesticides, fertilizer etc. Subsidies have also been provided in the form of MSP (minimum selling price) for certain agricultural products. Subsidies given to small and big enterprises are to set up export-oriented units or food processing units, cold storages, warehouses, or to set up SEZs or food parks to enhance the production of a particular cereal crop, fruit, vegetable, fish, meat products or certain packed products/processed food (dairy, apiculture) etc. By giving subsidies to farmers, the government incentivizes farmers to grow a particular crop, which can become a mass consumption item as government subsidies make it really cheap to produce and reduce the price of the products, and these crops when subsidized can change the dietary habits of not only millions but billions of people. A remarkable example of such action is the USA subsidizing corn and corn-related products which have flooded not only



the American market but also the world market with products like corn flour, cornstarch, corn syrup etc. Another remarkable example is from India. Government subsidy on rice and sugarcane has made India one of the largest producers of this agricultural produce. It has also made India one of the biggest exporters of these both commodities and flooding not only the Indian market but also the world market with it. Also, the Indian government gives rice and sugar subsidised to public distribution centres.

Well, there is nothing wrong in giving incentives to farmers to produce more to get good rates for their produce, but in the case of India, the biggest problem that we are facing is, that both these crops are highly water-intensive crops and a country of 1.4 billion is already facing a lot of trouble with its groundwater and water irrigation. Exporting these crops is like exporting water from the country. Rice cultivation also produces a large amount of methane, which is a harmful greenhouse gas (GHG). Another problem is that both these crops are high in carbohydrates and combined with an unhealthy lifestyle can lead to diseases such as obesity, diabetes, high blood pressure and other heart-related issues. Governments across the world should, before incentivising a certain crop, consider that incentivizing one crop can really impact the consumption patterns of the masses. It can have a detrimental effect on the health of millions of people.

Another remarkable example is from the industrialization period in Europe and America. Potatoes were made a mass-consumed vegetable as the labour working in the factories needed high calories and carbohydrates to function in the long shifts of the factories. This dietary habit continued even after the industrialization era ended. For the generations after that, potatoes still remained the go-to vegetable as it was a cheap vegetable and people ate it in the past, hence the generations copied the same eating habits even after changes in working and lifestyle.

Today's lifestyle requires less physical work and more mental effort, which requires crops and dietary habit changes. This change can benefit generations to come. For example, eyesight weakness and malnutrition are common problems children face these days. To curtail these problems vital vitamins like vitamin A and C-rich fruits and vegetables can be incentivized by the government. Less water-intensive cereals like Bajra, Jau, and Ragi can be incentivized to become part of the daily meal plan. The year 2023 has been declared the millet international year by the United Nations. This is "as it consumes 70% less water than rice and needs 40% less energy in processing and is climate-friendly and environmentally friendly."

(The writer is the Director of Rath Public Schools)

Empower ‘Divyangs’ with skills, inclusion

There is no dearth of opportunities for Persons with Disabilities, provided they are equipped with the right set of skills. The Govt is working in this direction



Divyangjan or persons with disabilities (PwDs) are a significant social group but are rarely provided with the right kind of opportunities, skills and platforms to showcase their talent and productive potential. It is unfortunately presumed that PwDs cannot make any meaningful contributions to our economy's growth, which is wrong. People with disabilities have immense potential to contribute significantly to the economy but they need skills that are best suited to them. It is an irony that PwDs, who account for more than 2 per cent of our total population, have not been allowed to be a part of mainstream discourse and pursuits aimed at empowerment through inclusion.

Unfortunately, the employability rate for PwDs is very low. It is estimated that only 36 per cent of India's 26 million PwDs are working. As per a report by the Union Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation on PwDs, nearly 64 per cent of persons with disabilities in India don't have jobs. More disabled men than women have jobs. As per an assessment of market intelligence, Unearth Insight, only 34 lakh out of almost 3 crore PwDs are employed but 1.3 crores are employable. Most of them are employed in organised and unorganised sectors, government entities or self-employed. It is therefore necessary to ensure that most PwDs get gainful jobs but how?

In order to ensure that persons with disabilities lead a dignified life independently, they must be provided with high-quality education. This is so that they have the freedom to choose their careers and have equal employment opportunities. There are several examples where Divyang people have achieved impressive feats in many fields thanks to their indomitable courage, talent and determination. If provided with the right environment, opportunities and skills, they can excel in every field. Education, in particular skill-based education, is the key to empower-

AS PER A REPORT BY THE UNION MINISTRY OF STATISTICS AND PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION ON PwDs, NEARLY 64 PER CENT OF THEM DON'T HAVE JOBS. MORE DISABLED MEN THAN WOMEN HAVE JOBS

(The writer is a co-founder and MD of Orane International, a training partner with the National Skill Development Corporation)

ment for everyone, including those with disabilities.

There is no dearth of jobs for PwDs, provided they are equipped with the right soft and practical skills. Some of the most valuable soft job skills for adults with disabilities that employers look for: attention to detail; communication skills; conflict management skills; problem-solving skills; teamwork skills; time management skills; and enrichment and life skills. Similarly, some hard job skills for PwDs include accounting, engineering, technical writing, computer-related jobs, healthcare, career counseling, customer service, insurance agent, massage therapist, telemarketer, photographer in a wheelchair, desktop publisher, graphic designer, web developer, bank teller, receptionist, financial analyst, landscaper or groundskeeper.

National Education Policy 2020 also underlines the importance of enabling arrangements in providing equal opportunities for quality education for children with disabilities. The conversion of NCERT textbooks for Classes I to VI into Indian Sign Language for hearing-impaired children is complete. It is a crucial initiative to include hearing-impaired students in mainstream education. It is heartening indeed to note that the Government is taking several steps to empower Divyangjan. Inculcating self-confidence among Divyangjan is very important to empower them for which they need skills. There are talents and abilities in people with disabilities; in some cases, these are greater than those found in normal people. Inclusive growth, development and confidence must encompass PwD aspirations.

It is worth noting that the

Government enacted the Right to Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016, which came into effect on April 19, 2017. It provides for 4 per cent reservation in government jobs for disabilities. The Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan, Accessible India Campaign, was launched by the Central Government on December 3, 2015. It provides universal accessibility for persons with disabilities so that they can live a meaningful life with dignity. Public buildings, transport systems and information and communication technology are included in this campaign. Keeping in view the problems related to accessibility faced by the masses, a mobile app has been developed to address accessibility problems in a quick and systematic manner.

The Government has also set up the Indian Sign Language Research and Training Centre (ISLRTC) to promote hearing-impaired persons' empowerment and to create sign language in the country. The institute, among other things, is continuously preparing sign language dictionaries that have so far included more than 10,000 words. The Government is also implementing a Unique Disability Identity Card (UDID) project to create a National Database for Persons with Disabilities. So far, over 84 lakh UDID cards have been prepared in 713 districts of all states and Union Territories.

The Disability Sports Centre is being established at Gwalior and the National Institute of Mental Health and Rehabilitation at Sehore, both Madhya Pradesh. Divya Kala Shakti is organised to showcase Divyang youngsters and children's talent and skills. However, they need a dedicated

programme to equip them with employable or gainful skills. The process of skilling and creating job opportunities for crores of youth through Skill India Mission and Kaushal Rozgar Kendra cannot exclude PwDs. Their needs require a specific and targeted approach.

We have the Skill Council for Persons with Disability (SCPwD) as a national body to fulfill the mission of mainstreaming PwDs through skill training to enable them to earn a livelihood and lead a life of dignity in the mainstream society and in turn contribute to the growing economy of the country. Skill training is also imparted at accredited training centres through trained and certified trainers. Trainers are trained on NSQC-approved job roles aligned to a specific disability. Trainers are also certified in disability orientation and sensitisation.

As of now, we haven't been inclusive in our approach to skilling people in any way. A few sectors' artisans received some attention, while many classes of artisans such as carpenters, iron smiths, sculptors, masons and others that are an integral part of society have been adapting to the changing times to fulfil; the needs of society that were ignored.

PwDs were rarely discussed in relation to their skill set. Empowering every section of society is essential to our country's development journey. I totally agree with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's argument that they should get easy loans, skilling, technical support, digital empowerment, brand promotion, marketing and raw material. Development of traditional artisans and craftsmen while preserving their rich tradition must include PwDs.

Innovative approaches are galvanising livestock economy

A conclave in Hyderabad recently brought more than 100 startups, 50 CII members and the fast-growing livestock sector together

The livestock sector, besides contributing to the national economy, plays a key role in providing livelihood to 80 million rural households and is growing at a high and consistent rate in the country, with a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 7.93 per cent between 2014-15 to 2020-21 (at constant prices), which is much higher than the general agriculture sector.

India currently ranks third in unicorns and has a thriving startup ecosystem. It is estimated that 15 per cent of the world's agri-tech startups are based here. Modern technical breakthroughs have impacted almost every component of India's dairy and livestock value chain. This is due to Government initiatives to encourage investments, ease of



doing business and innovation.

Animal husbandry and dairying have more than 700 startups registered with the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade. This proves that there is more room for technology deployment and monetisation of interventions in the related sectors.

Startup conclave

A recent startup conclave in Hyderabad on February 28 included showcasing of a 100 select startups, a pitch fest, a buyer-seller meet, and a workshop for startups to train the early-stage startups operating in the animal husbandry and dairying sector in pitching, building the main business pillars, and their story of impact. Beside more than 100 startups, 50 members from the Confederation of Indian

Industry also participated in the event, searching for creative solutions to the key issues facing the livestock sector.

Startups' exhibition

Startups showcased their goods and innovations, including cosmetics made of camel milk and donkey milk (they offer a mind-boggling rate of Rs 1,200 per kg of donkey milk to the owners of donkey farms), building products and panels made of cow dung, innovations in animal feed and insect feed, platforms for online livestock trade, platforms that connect farmers with embedded digital finance options, new yoghurt flavours, breed improvement technology for cattle, intelligent dairy automation solutions, and cold chain solutions. Startups benefited greatly from the expo as

it gave them access to investors, dairy cooperatives, and government partners.

Pitch fest & shoring capacity

A special pitching event with a panel of investors, including venture capitalists and angel investors, was organised for 10 startups. With innovative products and services, the startups represent the animal husbandry and dairy industries. These products and services include artificial insemination equipment, cattle reproduction solutions, traceability, heat detection, frozen semen thawing, veterinary care, nanotechnology, polymer chemistry, vaccines, and diagnostics, among others.

A concurrent workshop was held for early-stage startups to guide them in the art of pitching and developing

primary business pillars/story of impact, problem-solving, and government-e-market-place. The speakers delved into investor psychology and expectations to help the audience understand what is required to have the highest chance of acquiring investment from a venture capital fund and PE and angel investors.

On the finer elements of pitching, term sheet preparation, legal rights, value, etc., the experts gave enlightening advice. The buyer-seller meeting was a fascinating session of the conclave that drew enthusiastic involvement from both sides. Of the prominent dairy cooperatives and enterprises participating in the event, ten start-ups delivered a sales pitch to market their products.

Technological advancements will lead to significant improvements in day-to-day operations and lower business costs. The Indian Government employs numerous cutting-edge breeding techniques in the animal husbandry industry to maximise local bovine herd production. Startups are crucial for making such a system self-sustaining.

The growth of startups has improved this ecosystem's development, organisation, and resilience, mostly to the benefit of its most significant stakeholder—the Indian farmers—who make up the agriculture sector, which includes the livestock industry and forms the backbone of the nation's economy.

Innovative approaches to

the problems of animal health, online marketplaces, improved supply chains, products with value-added, mobile apps, drones, and other investments are not only empowering producers or entrepreneurs but also improving the market, making resources more available, preventing waste, maximising profits, creating scalable businesses, and removing bottlenecks.

The support that the Government gives to startups shows the importance and impact of startups in the Indian economy. The livestock industry in India is poised to grow and will continue to be crucial in advancing our Hon'ble Prime Minister's goal of building an Aatmanirbhar (self-sufficient) India.

Russian strikes in Ukraine kill 10 civilians | N Korea tests radioactive tsunami weapon at sea

AP ■ KIVY

Russian long-range strikes killed at least 10 civilians and wounded 20 others in several areas of Ukraine on Friday, Ukraine's presidential office said, as a senior Moscow official warned that the Kremlin's forces were prepared for an expected Ukrainian counteroffensive in the coming weeks.

Five people died in Kostiantynivka, a town in eastern Ukraine's Donetsk province, when a Russian missile hit an aid station. Ukrainian authorities last year established hundreds of so-called "points of invincibility", where residents hard-pressed by the war could warm up, charge their cellphones and get snacks.

Local prosecutors said the Russians attacked Kostyantynivka with S-300 anti-aircraft missiles. The civilians who died were refugees, according to Donetsk Gov. Pavlo Kyrylenko. As the mostly artillery war of the recent winter months stretched into its second spring, Russian forces also used air-launched missiles, exploding drones and gliding bombs in their attacks on several regions early on Friday, Ukrainian air force spokesman Yuri Ihnat said.

Two civilians were killed and nine were wounded in the Sumy province town of Bilopillya by a night-time rocket and artillery barrage and air strikes, the administration of the northeast region said. In the southern Kherson region, which Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy visited on Thursday, Russian shelling killed one person in the main city, also called Kherson, and killed another person and wounded four others in the town of Bilozerk.

On Wednesday, a Russian drone attack struck a high school and dormitories south of Kyiv, killing at least nine people. Kyiv's forces are poised to use the improved spring weather and the arrival of modern weapons supplied by



its Western allies, including tanks, to launch a counteroffensive aimed at dislodging Russian troops from occupied areas of Ukraine.

But Dmitry Medvedev, Russia's former president and now the deputy head of Russia's Security Council chaired by President Vladimir Putin, said the Russian military was ready to repel a counterattack. "Our General Staff is assessing all that," Medvedev said. He also said that a Ukrainian attempt to seize Crimea, which Russia annexed in 2014, could trigger a nuclear response from Moscow. "An attempt to split part of the state away means an encroachment at the very existence of the state," he said.

UN decries killing of Russian POWs and Ukrainians

Kyiv (AP): UN human rights monitors have documented dozens of summary killings of Ukrainian and Russian prisoners of war, as well as the use of torture, human shields and other abuses against POWs since Russia invaded its neighbour that could amount to war crimes, according to a report released Friday.

The first full look by the U.N. human rights office's mission in Ukraine at the treatment of POWs was released along with an update of human rights violations overall from a six-month period that ran through January. The report was based on interviews with about 400 POWs, half of them Ukrainians who were released and the other half Russians held captive in Ukraine.

The team said it had no access to POWs held in Russia or Russia-occupied parts of Ukraine where it identified 48 internment sites.

N Korea tests radioactive tsunami weapon at sea

AP ■ SEOUL

North Korea claimed on Friday to have tested a nuclear-capable underwater drone designed to generate a gigantic "radioactive tsunami" that would destroy naval strike groups and ports. Analysts were skeptical that the device presents a major new threat, but the test underlines the North's commitment to raising nuclear threats. The test this week came as the United States reportedly planned to deploy aircraft carrier strike groups and other advanced assets to waters off the Korean Peninsula.

Military tensions are at a high point as the pace of both North Korean weapons tests and US-South Korea joint military exercises has accelerated in the past year in a cycle of tit-for-tat responses.



This photo provided by the North Korean government, shows what it says is an underwater blast of test warhead loaded to an unmanned underwater nuclear attack craft "Haeil" during an exercise around Hongwon Bay in waters off North Korea's eastern coast Thursday, AP/PTI

Pyongyang's official Korean Central News Agency said the new weapon, which can be deployed from the coast or towed by surface ships, is built to "stealthily infiltrate into operational waters and make a super-scale radioactive tsunami through an underwater explosion" to destroy enemy naval strike groups and ports.

The report came hours before South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol pledged to make North Korea pay for its "reckless provocations" as he attended a remembrance service honouring 55 South Korean troops killed during major clashes with the North near their western sea border in past years.

The testing of the purported "nuclear underwater attack drone" was part of a three-day exercise that simulated nuclear attacks on unspecified South Korean targets, which also included cruise missile launches on Wednesday.

KCNA said the North's latest tests were aimed at alerting the United States and South Korea of a brewing "nuclear crisis" as they continue with their "intentional, persistent and provocative war drills." It said

the tests were supervised by North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, who vowed to make his rivals "plunge into despair." The US and South Korea completed an 11-day exercise on Thursday that included their biggest field training in years, and are preparing another round of joint naval drills that will reportedly involve a US aircraft carrier. Hours after the North Korean report, South Korea's air force released details of a five-day joint aerial drill with the United States that began Monday and concluded on Friday above waters off South Korea's western coast, which included live-fire demonstrations of air-to-air and air-to-ground weapons.

The air force said the exercise, which involved various South Korean fighter jets and at least one US A-10 attack plane, was aimed at verifying precision strike capabilities and reaffirming the credibility of Seoul's "three-axis" strategy against North Korean nuclear threats — preemptively striking sources of attacks, intercepting incoming missiles and neutralizing the North's leadership and key military facilities.

The North Korean drone is named "Haeil," a Korean word meaning tidal waves or tsunamis. The North's Rodong Simmun newspaper published photos of Kim smiling next to a large, torpedo-shaped object at an unspecified indoor facility, but didn't identify it.

Other photos published with the same article showed sea-surface tracks supposedly caused by the drone's underwater trajectory and a pillar of water exploding up into the air, possibly caused by what state media described as an underwater detonation of a mock nuclear weapon carried by the drone. KCNA said the drone was deployed on Tuesday off the North's eastern coast, traveled underwater for nearly 60 hours, and detonated a test warhead at a target standing for an enemy port. It said the test verified the operational reliability of the drone, which it said the North has been developing since 2012 and tested more 50 times in the past two years, although the weapon was never mentioned before in state media until Friday.

Israeli AG: Netanyahu broke law on conflict of interest

Jerusalem (AP): Israel's attorney general on Friday warned Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu that he has violated the Supreme Court's conflict of interest ruling, which barred him from direct involvement in his government's divisive plans for a judicial overhaul. Netanyahu's far-right government has barreled ahead with plans to weaken the Supreme Court and grant politicians less judicial oversight in their policymaking despite massive protests from across Israeli society — including an uproar among business leaders, top legal officials and military reservists. On Thursday, just hours after his coalition passed a law that would protect the Israeli leader from being



An Israeli activist dressed as a clown runs with border police as Israelis protest against plans by 'Netanyahu' in Tel Aviv, Israel on Thursday. AP/PTI

deemed unfit to rule because of his corruption trial and claims of a conflict of interest, Netanyahu defiantly pledged to proceed with the overhaul. Netanyahu contended that stripping the attorney general

of the power to remove him from office was necessary to clear the way for him to participate in the negotiations on the judicial overhaul in spite of her instructions, and try to "mend the rift" in the polarised nation.

Demonstrators protest Netanyahu's visit to UK

London: British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak welcomed Benjamin Netanyahu at his official residence in London on Friday as protesters shouting "Shame!" in Hebrew demonstrated against the Israeli leader's right-wing policies and his plans to overhaul the country's judiciary.

Netanyahu had to pass by hundreds of protesters waving Israeli flags and waving signs calling for the defense of Israeli democracy as he arrived for talks that are expected to focus on concerns about Iran's nuclear programme.

"We are Israelis and Jews living in the UK demonstrating against Prime Minister Netanyahu, who is leading a judicial coup turning Israel into a dictatorship," one placard read.

Netanyahu arrived in London as protesters in Israel blocked roads and clashed with police over his right-wing government's plans to overhaul the judicial system.

The proposals have ignited the biggest protests in the country's history amid rare dissent from people throughout Israeli society, including military reservists, navy veterans, high-tech businesspeople and former officials. Netanyahu's proposals would give his government more control over judicial appointments, weaken the Supreme Court by limiting judicial review of legislation and allow Parliament to overturn court decisions with a simple majority vote. **AP**

Large asteroid coming close, but zero chance of hitting earth

Cape Canaveral: An asteroid big enough to wipe out a city will zip harmlessly between Earth and the moon's orbit this weekend, missing both celestial bodies. Saturday's close encounter will offer astronomers the chance to study a space rock from just over 100,000 miles (168,000 kilometers) away. That's less than half the distance from here to the moon, making it visible through binoculars and small telescopes.

While asteroid flybys are common, NASA said it's rare for one so big to come so close — about once a decade. Scientists estimate its size somewhere between 130 feet and 300 feet (40 meters and 90 meters).

Discovered a month ago, the asteroid known as 2023 DZ2 will pass within 320,000 miles (515,000 kilometers) of the moon on Saturday and, several hours later, buzz the Indian Ocean at about 17,500 mph (28,000 kph). **AP**

Saudi Arabia, Syria may restore ties

AP ■ BEIRUT

Saudi Arabia is in talks with Syria to reopen its embassy in the war-torn nation for the first time in a decade, state television in the kingdom reported late Thursday, the latest diplomatic reshuffling in the region. The announcement on state TV comes after Chinese-mediated talks in Beijing saw Saudi Arabia and Iran agree to reopen embassies in each others' nations after years of tensions. Syrian President Bashar Assad has maintained his grip on power in the Mediterranean nation rocked by the 2011 Arab Spring only with the help of Iran and Russia, which made a historic call earlier in the day to Oman.

Saudi Arabian state television aired a report late Thursday, quoting an anonymous official in the country's Foreign Ministry, acknowledging the talks between the kingdom and Damascus.

"A source in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs revealed to Al-Ekhabariyah that ongoing discussions have begun with the

Syrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, commenting on what was circulated by some international media," an anchor said on air. "Discussions are underway between officials in the kingdom and their counterparts in Syria about resuming the provision of consular services." Arabic-language media had been reporting the possible detente in recent days ahead of the Saudi state TV announcement. The Wall Street Journal, quoting anonymous Saudi and Syrian officials, attributed the talks to reopen the countries' embassies to Russian mediation.

Syrian state media did not immediately acknowledge the talks. Officials in both Saudi Arabia and Syria did not immediately respond to requests for comment from The Associated Press early Friday.

Earlier Thursday, Russian President Vladimir Putin called Oman's Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, which the Kremlin called the "the first high-level bilateral contact since the establishment of diplomatic relations" between the nations.

Protests continue as Paris reels under violence

AP ■ PARIS

Protesters angry at French President Emmanuel Macron's pension reforms continued with scattered actions on Friday amid slowed train traffic, rows of trucks blocking access to Marseille's commercial port and debris still littering the Paris streets following the previous day's mass demonstrations. Over 450 protesters were arrested in Paris and beyond on Thursday as some 300 demonstrations drew more than a million people nationwide to protest against unpopular pension reforms.

Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin said Friday that some 441 police and gendarmes were injured as violence marred some marches. He added that 1,000 trash bins were set on fire in the French capital during the previous day's action. Amid a weeks-long refuse collectors strike, trash bins have become a symbol of the protest.

Polls say most French oppose Macron's bill to increase the retirement age from 62 to 64, which he says is necessary to keep the system afloat. The supply of fuel to Paris by the large Gonfreville-l'Orcher refinery in Normandy resumed on Friday after police intervened, according to Energy Transition Minister Agnès Pannier-Runacher. At the Fos-sur-mer oil terminal near Marseille, however, protesters were meeting to plan future oil refinery blockades.

Fearing disruptions in coming days as actions continue, France's Civil Aviation Authority has requested that a third of



flights be cancelled on Sunday at Paris' second airport, Orly, with 20 per cent to be cancelled on Monday. Unions have called for new protests and strikes on Tuesday, when Britain's King Charles III is scheduled to visit Bordeaux on the second day of his trip to France. The heavy wooden door of the elegant Bordeaux City Hall was destroyed by fire Thursday night by people taking part in an

unauthorised demonstration. The mayor of Bordeaux, Pierre Hurmic, said Friday he had "difficulty understanding the interest of such acts of vandalism." Hurmic said that he hopes Charles' visit to his city next week will not be cancelled. "I hope that we do not give this gift to the thugs," he said, although he acknowledged that a tram ride with the king may

British King's visit postponed

Paris (AP): Protesters angry at French President Emmanuel Macron's pension reforms continued with scattered actions on Friday, as the unrest across the country led officials to postpone a planned state visit by Britain's King Charles III.

Although no major protests were planned on Friday, train traffic was slowed, rows of trucks blocked access to Marseille's commercial port and debris still littered the Paris streets following the previous day's mass demonstrations. Over 450 protesters were arrested in Paris and beyond

on Thursday as some 300 demonstrations drew more than a million people nationwide to protest against unpopular pension reforms.

Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin said on Friday that some 441 police and gendarmes were injured as violence marred some marches.

He added that 1,000 trash bins were set on fire in the French capital during the previous day's action. Amid a weeks-long refuse collectors strike, trash bins have become a symbol of the protest. Macron's office announced that a state visit by the British king was postponed.

Report on Leicester clashes warns of ethnic enclaves in UK

AP ■ LONDON

A fact-finding report into the violent clashes between groups of men on the streets of Leicester following an India-Pakistan Asia Cup cricket match in Dubai last year has warned of ethnic enclaves or ghettos of migrants in the eastern England city as a key factor behind communal tension.

The Delhi-based Centre for Democracy, Pluralism and Human Rights (CDPHR) think tank, which launched its report at a Committee Room in the House of Commons on Thursday, sheds light on the events that took place in August-September last year and their human rights implications. In its "Fact-finding report on Leicester Violence 2022 – The rise of territorial majoritarianism and Hinduphobia", the think tank calls for immediate action to address the underlying issues that led to the Leicester vio-

lence such as the rise of extremism and hate speech.

"There were two kinds of stories circulating around the violence that occurred, which is the motivation behind this fact-finding report," explained Rashmi Samant of the ATMAH non-profit organisation and one of the co-authors of the report. "What we found was that different religious groups in east Leicester, ground zero of the unrest, are living in ethnic enclaves – with some ethnicities clubbed up in some spaces more than others. This phenomenon is not common in the United Kingdom but we found it continues to happen in Leicester because of the spillover effect involving migrants from countries like Pakistan and Bangladesh," she said.

The report claims that the presence of these ethnic enclaves gave rise to territorial tensions and localised majoritarianism, which were

witnessed both before and during the unrest in east Leicester – the ethnic enclave of the Muslim community residing in Leicester with a minority presence of the Hindu community. Conservative Party MP Bob Blackman, chair of the India (Trade and Investment) All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG), said at the launch event that "fake news" spread on social media has been identified as a major factor behind the escalation of the clashes. "Lessons must be learnt. There was a false narrative being spread to create divisions within the communities. In Leicester, people of all religions have lived alongside each other for many, many years," said Blackman.

The findings of the report say that the attackers attempted to undermine the fundamental principles of democracy and pluralism, including freedom of expression by spreading misinformation.

Jamaican cleric gets 18-year sentence in NY terrorism case

New York: A cleric arrested in his native Jamaica and extradited to New York to face state terrorism charges on accusations of recruiting support for the Islamic State group was sentenced on Thursday to 18 years in prison.

Abdullah el-Faisal was convicted in January in state Supreme Court in Manhattan on counts including soliciting or providing support for an act of terrorism. The state law he was prosecuted under was put in place after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks, and prosecutors said his case was the first state-level trial on terrorism charges.

El-Faisal was extradited to New York City in 2020 after being arrested in Jamaica in 2017. Beginning in 2016, authorities said an undercover officer in New York City posed as a would-be jihadist and started communicating with the cleric.

The cleric was accused of giving out information to help the officer ultimately connect with the Islamic State group, as well as trying to do things like act as a conduit for a marriage between the officer and a member of the militant group.

Prosecutors said el-Faisal had supported the Islamic State organization for several years. **AP**

Starbucks CEO to work as barista

New York: Starbucks' new Indian-origin CEO Laxman Narasimhan has said he will work as a barista once a month in stores to stay close to the company's culture, customers, challenges and opportunities.

Narasimhan, 55, officially became the Seattle-based coffee giant's chief executive on Monday, taking the reins from Howard Schultz about two weeks earlier than scheduled. He was welcomed as incoming chief executive officer of Starbucks with a coffee tasting in the place where it all began – at Seattle's Pike Place market store. In a letter to the employees on Thursday, the Indian-American business executive said he will always be a "fierce advocate" for the company's partners and its culture. "With you, I've experienced every aspect of the business to learn what it truly means to wear the green apron. You've welcomed me into our stores, trained me in how to be a barista ... all to

help me deeply understand what we do, how we do it, and the challenges and opportunities facing us," he wrote.

Barista is a person who serves in a coffee bar. "To keep us close to the culture and our customers, as well as to our challenges and opportunities, I intend to continue working in stores for a half day each month," he was quoted as saying by CNN.

"I thought it was very important for me to put myself in the shoes of the partners and really understand what they do and how they do it.

There were things I learned through experience in all of this. It taught me a lot," he said in a statement.

Pune-born Narasimhan joined Starbucks as interim CEO in October and has since spent time getting to know the company — including earning a barista certification, which requires 40 hours of training in stores. **PTI**

Bolsonaro hands undeclared jewels to authorities

AP ■ BRASILIA

A representative of Brazil's former President Jair Bolsonaro on Friday handed a set of diamond jewellery he had received from Saudi Arabia to a state bank, as he was ordered to do by a government watchdog.

The state bank Caixa Economica Federal received the box of precious stones at one of its branches in the capital Brasilia, the bank's press office told The Associated Press. A federal watchdog on Wednesday gave Bolsonaro five days to hand over the precious stones that he had received while president.

Authorities are investigating whether the goods were a public gift that Bolsonaro improperly tried to prevent from being incorporated into the presidency's public collection, or a private gift that Bolsonaro tried to sneak into Brazil without paying taxes.

Brazilian media started reporting on the jewels earlier this month, along with another set that was seized at the international airport in Sao Paulo. The seized set is estimated to be worth several million dollars. Neither set was declared to tax authorities.

Bolsonaro, who denies any wrongdoing with the jewellery, has been in the United States since late-December, just days before the end of his presidential term.

Sensex, Nifty fall 1% amid weak global equities trend

Sensex declined 398.18 points, Nifty fell 131.85 points

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty buckled under selling pressure for the second straight session to settle nearly 1 per cent lower on Friday as investors pared exposure to the metal, energy and realty stocks amid a bearish trend in Asian and European markets.

Besides, a depreciating rupee against the US dollar and fresh foreign fund outflows also hit investor sentiments, traders said. In a volatile trade, the 30-share BSE Sensex declined 398.18 points or 0.69 per cent to finish at 57,527.10. During the day, it went lower by 502.3 points or 0.86 per cent to 57,422.98.

The broader NSE Nifty fell 131.85 points or 0.77 per cent to end at 16,945.05.

Bajaj Finserv was the biggest loser among the Sensex constituents, sliding 3.81 per cent, followed by Bajaj Finance, Tata Steel, Reliance Industries, HCL



Tech, SBI, Larsen & Toubro and Mahindra & Mahindra, Axis Bank and Titan.

On the other hand, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Infosys, Tech Mahindra, Power Grid, Asian Paints and Wipro were the gainers.

In Asia markets, stock exchanges in Seoul, Japan, Shanghai and Hong Kong ended lower.

European markets were also quoting in the red in the after-

noon trade. The US markets ended higher on Thursday.

Meanwhile, the rupee declined 25 paise to close at 82.45 against the US dollar.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude dipped 1.73 per cent to USD 74.60 per barrel.

Foreign Portfolio Investors offloaded equities worth Rs 995.01 crore on Thursday after a day's breather, according to exchange data.

AMC stocks under pressure; UTI AMC falls nearly 5%

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Shares of asset management firms declined on Friday amid amendments to the Finance Bill changing tax treatment for debt mutual funds.

The stock of UTI Asset Management Company tanked 4.73 per cent, Aditya Birla Sun Life AMC declined 4.44 per cent, HDFC Asset Management Company fell 4.21 per cent, Shriram Asset Management Company dropped 3.21 per cent and Nippon Life India Asset Management dipped 1.29 per cent on the BSE.

The broader market also faced selling pressure as the 30-share BSE Sensex declined 398.18 points or 0.69 per cent to finish at 57,527.10.

The Lok Sabha on Friday approved The Finance Bill 2023 with 64 official amendments, including providing tax relief to some taxpayers opting for new tax regime, and removing long-term tax benefit for debt mutual funds to bring them at par with other interest earning instruments.

"The asset management industry was hit hard by tax



changes and the elimination of the indexation benefit of debt mutual funds," Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services, said.

Asset managers termed amendments to the Finance Bill changing tax treatment for debt mutual funds as a "surprise", which will be detrimental to the agenda of corporate bond market development.

Late on Thursday evening, the industry came to know about the changes the government proposed, wherein tax benefits for over three year investments in debt mutual fund investments will not be available

and all such bets will attract short-term capital gains tax.

The Bill was passed by the Lok Sabha on Friday.

A Balasubramanian, chairman of MF industry lobby grouping Amfi, who also heads Aditya Birla Sun Life AMC, called the amendments as "surprising" and added that the industry will have to be ready for the changes that set in from April 1.

Consultancy firm Dhruva Advisors' partner Punit Shah said the amendment to treat gains on debt mutual funds as short-term gains will substantially diminish the attractiveness of

such products.

"The amendment in the finance bill will have significant structural changes to the way we invest. For mutual funds to get investor interest, it'll now have to purely be on their ability to add extra "risk adjusted returns" and not because of any tax arbitrage," Srikanth Subramanian, CEO of wealth management firm Kotak Cherry, said.

Financial advisor firm Fintoo's founder Manish P Hingar explained that mutual funds may no longer receive indexation benefits and will be taxed at marginal rates, and added the move will also impact gold funds and international funds.

"This move may have a negative impact on all debt funds, particularly in the retail category, as ultra-high net worth and high net worth individuals may choose to invest in safe havens like bank fixed deposits.

"We may see a shift from long-term debt funds to equity funds, and money may be directed towards sovereign gold bonds, bank fixed deposits, and non-convertible debentures in the debt category," Hingar said.



RBI's MPC to meet 6 times next fiscal; first on April 3-6

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The Reserve Bank's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) will meet six times in the next financial year.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) rate setting panel will be holding its first meeting of the next fiscal from April 3-6, the central bank said in a statement.

The RBI Governor announces the bi-monthly monetary policy after MPC's deliberations on the prevailing domestic and economic situations. The meetings are held over three days.

According to the schedule released by the RBI on Friday, the first bi-monthly monetary policy of FY2023-24 is scheduled for April 3, 5 and 6; and next will be held during June 6-8.

The third, fourth and fifth meetings have been scheduled for August 8-10, October 4-6, and December 6-8.

The sixth bi-monthly meeting of the MPC is scheduled to be held on February 6-8, 2024.

Headed by the Governor, the committee has two representatives from the central bank and three external members.

The central government has tasked the RBI to ensure that inflation remains at 4 per cent with a margin of 2 per cent on the either side.

Govt to set up panel headed by finance secretary to improve NPS

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The government on Friday announced that a committee under the finance secretary will be set up to improve the New Pension System (NPS) with a view to take care of the concerns of employees while maintaining fiscal prudence.

While moving the Finance Bill 2023 for consideration and passage in the Lok Sabha, finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman said that the new approach to the NPS will be designed for adoption by both central and state governments.

"I propose to set up a committee under the finance secretary to look into the issue of pensions and evolve an approach which addresses the

needs of employees while maintaining fiscal prudence to protect common citizens," she said.

"The approach will be designed for adoption by both the central government and state governments," she said.

The decision comes in the backdrop of several non-BJP states deciding to revert to the DA-linked Old Pension Scheme (OPS) and also employee organisations in some other states raising demand for the same.

The state governments of Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Punjab and Himachal Pradesh have informed the Centre about their decision to revert to the Old Pension Scheme and have requested a refund of corpus accumulated under the NPS.



Earlier this month, the central government informed Parliament that it is not considering any proposal to restore the OPS in respect of the central government employees recruited after January 1, 2004.

Under the OPS, retired government employees received 50 per cent of their last drawn salary as monthly pensions. The amount keeps increasing with hike in the DA rates. OPS is not fiscally sustainable as it is not con-

tributory in nature and the burden on exchequer keeps on mounting.

The total assets under management under the National Pension System and Atal Pension Yojana stood at Rs 8.81 lakh crore as on March 4, 2023. NPS has been implemented for all government employees except those in armed forces joining central government on or after 1st of January 2004. Most of the state/ Union Territory governments have also notified the NPS for their new employees.

According to the PFRDA (Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority), 26 state governments, with the exception of Tamil Nadu and West Bengal, have notified and implemented NPS for their employees. NPS has been made avail-

able to every Indian citizen from May 1, 2009 on a voluntary basis.

Further, on June 1, 2015, the Atal Pension Yojana has been launched which has given the much required impetus to the social security schemes.

To regulate and develop the pension market, the government created PFRDA in 2003. It was initially designed for government employees exclusively, but its services were subsequently expanded to include all Indian nationals and NRIs, including self-employed persons.

PFRDA promotes, develops and regulates organised pension funds; namely National Pension System (NPS) to serve the old age income needs of people on a sustainable basis.



Further delay in e-commerce policy rollout may accentuate issues in digital mkt: Par panel

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Any further delay in formulating and notifying a dedicated e-commerce policy may further accentuate the prevailing issues in India's digital market, according to a Parliamentary panel report.

The report tabled on Friday urged the Centre to finalise the draft National E-Commerce Policy at the earliest.

The department-related Parliamentary Standing Committee on Commerce in its report on the 'Promotion and Regulation of E-Commerce in India' observed that the absence of a dedicated e-commerce policy has resulted in a 'strategy vacuum' for the sector and 'ineffective regulation'.

Notably, the Committee said as the current regulatory framework is restricted to prevention and identification of sellers who have violated rules regarding Intellectual Property Rights, there exist gaps in enforcement mechanisms with regard to provision for imposing ex-post penalty on sellers who have violated the relevant rules.

It recommended the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade to "develop appropriate mechanisms for enforcement of rules related to Intellectual Property Rights in e-commerce space in consultation with the relevant Ministries/Departments".

It also asserted that the online sale of medicines has not been regulated despite objections and concerns raised by stakeholders, and opined and reiterated its recommendation to

the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare to notify E-Pharmacy Rules and formulate comprehensive guidelines with regard to e-pharmacy/e-health platforms.

Noting that the Draft National E-Commerce Policy is at the stage of inter-ministerial consultations and could not be finalised till date, the panel said "any further delay in formulating and notifying a dedicated policy may further accentuate the prevailing issues in the fast paced digital market".

The Committee also observed that delay in finalisation and passage of the Competition Amendment Bill might have 'far reaching adverse and irreversible implications for competition in digital markets in India'.

It recommended the Ministry of Corporate Affairs to take concerted efforts to finalise and get the bill enacted at the earliest. The panel said necessary provisions should be incorporated in the amendment bill to empower and enable the Competition Commission of India as well as the Digital and Markets and Data Unit to effectively regulate the fast paced digital market taking into account the present day realities.

The Competition (Amendment) Bill, which seeks structural changes in the governing structure of the Competition Commission of India (CCI), was introduced in the Lok Sabha in August last year.

The CCI has in recent times ordered probes as well as passed various orders with respect to alleged unfair business practices in the growing digital market.

Pvt hospitals to clock 10-11% revenue growth in FY22-23, FY23-24: Report

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Revenue of private hospitals will grow 10-11 per cent in financial year 2022-23 and 2023-24, supported by increasing domestic demand and pick-up in medical tourism, says a report. According to the Crisil Ratings report, revenue of private hospitals will grow on the back of healthy bed occupancy and sustenance of high average revenue per occupied bed (ARPOB).

In FY22, private hospitals had reported an all-time high operating profitability of 19 per cent due to a surge in treatment during the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic, which also pushed up occupancy levels, and, later, pent-up demand for elective surgeries, it said.

"Growing health awareness, especially after Covid-19, leading to increase in domestic demand together with recovery



in medical tourism, will ensure bed occupancy being maintained at almost similar levels of 60 per cent (past five fiscals average) even as bed addition continues," Crisil Ratings Senior Director Anuj Sethi said.

Sethi further noted that occupancy dipped only once during this period to 53 per cent due to lockdown enforced during the first phase of the pandemic.

Healthy cash generation,

leading to limited reliance on external borrowing to fund higher capex (both greenfield and brownfield) will in turn help private hospitals maintain adequate debt protection metrics and keep credit risk profiles stable, Crisil Ratings added.

Further, rising insurance coverage will make quality treatment more accessible, and support demand as well, he said adding that ARPOB which grew 20 per cent in FY22, will contin-

ue to register modest growth, supporting revenues.

The report further said private hospitals are seeing a gradual return of medical tourism - accounting for 10-12 per cent of revenue pre-pandemic - that got affected considerably during the pandemic, amid travel restrictions.

Lower cost of treatments, modern facilities with well-trained personnel, and increasing air-connectivity are expected to restore revenue from medical tourism to pre-pandemic levels. This will further support occupancy levels despite aggressive bed additions, Crisil Ratings noted.

However, the report noted any resurgence of Covid-19 or intense viral cases that triggers lockdown and restricts travel, or any regulatory intervention that impedes the performance of private hospitals, will bear watching in the road ahead.

RBI Central board discusses global, domestic eco situation

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Reserve Bank of India's central board on Friday reviewed the global and domestic economic situation as well as the associated challenges.

The 601st meeting of the Central Board of Directors of Reserve Bank of India (RBI) was held at Hyderabad under the chairmanship of Governor Shaktikanta Das.

"The board in its meeting reviewed the global and domestic economic situation and associated challenges, including the impact of current global geopolitical developments," RBI said in a statement.

Further, it said, the board discussed RBI's activities during the current accounting year 2022-23. The board also approved the budget for the accounting year 2023-24.

The meeting took place in the backdrop of global concerns over failure of banks in the US

amid aggressive monetary tightening. The US Federal Reserve on Wednesday hiked interest rates by 25 basis points to tame high inflation despite the banking crisis.

Both, Bank of England and European Central Bank (ECB) have also raised their benchmark interest rates. Meanwhile, policy makers and experts have said that the Indian banking system is in good shape.

At the meeting on Friday, directors of RBI's central board — Satish K Marathe, Sachin Chaturvedi, Pankaj Ramanbhai Patel and Ravindra H Dholakia — were present.

RBI Deputy Governors — Mahesh Kumar Jain, Michael Debabrata Patra, M Rajeshwar Rao, and T Rabi Sankar — were also present.

Besides, Economic Affairs Secretary Ajay Sethi, and Financial Services Secretary Vivek Joshi participated in the meeting.

CCI approves GMR Airports Infra-Aeroports de Paris SA deal

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Fair-trade regulator CCI on Friday said it has approved the proposed deal of GMR Airports Infrastructure and Aeroports de Paris SA (ADP) under the green channel route.

The proposed combination involves ADP's proposed acquisition of and subscription to foreign currency convertible bonds (FCCB) issued by GMR Airports Infrastructure Ltd, according to a CCI notice.

The Competition Commission of India (CCI) has cleared the deal. It has also given nod to the proposed intra-group merger of GMR Airports Ltd and GMR Infra Developers Ltd (GIDL) with and into GMR Airports Infrastructure Ltd.

Also, the regulator has given its nod to the proposed acquisition by ADP (and its group entities) of equity shares and optionally convertible redeem-

ing to a CCI notice.

The Competition Commission of India (CCI) has cleared the deal. It has also given nod to the proposed intra-group merger of GMR Airports Ltd and GMR Infra Developers Ltd (GIDL) with and into GMR Airports Infrastructure Ltd.

Also, the regulator has given its nod to the proposed acquisition by ADP (and its group entities) of equity shares and optionally convertible redeem-



able preference shares of GMR Airports Infrastructure post-merger, CCI said.

On March 19, GMR Airports Infrastructure Ltd (GIL) announced the merger of GMR

Airports Ltd with GIL.

ADP is an international airport operator owned by the French Government, while GMR Airports Infrastructure is a listed-entity and global infrastructure conglomerate with expertise in operating airports. It primarily operates through its subsidiary GMR Airports Ltd (GAL).

GIDL is a wholly-owned subsidiary of GMR Airports Infrastructure.

Individual taxpayers with income marginally over ₹7 lakh to get relief under new tax regime

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

In a relief to taxpayers opting for new tax regime, individuals earning marginally higher income than no-tax ceiling of Rs 7 lakh will pay tax only on the differential income after the government amended the Finance Bill. The Finance Bill 2023, passed by the Lok Sabha on Friday, has proposed a mar-



ginal relief to taxpayers under new tax regime.

Explaining the provision, the finance ministry said under

the new tax regime with effect from April 1, if a taxpayer has annual income of Rs 7 lakh s/he pays no tax. But if s/he has income of Rs 7,00,100 s/he pays tax of 25,010. Thus an additional income of Rs 100 leads to a tax of Rs 25,010.

Hence, marginal relief is proposed to that so that the tax what one pays should not be more than the income that

exceeds Rs 7 lakh (Rs 100 in this case), the ministry said.

Nangia Andersen LLP Partner Sandeep Jhunjhunwala said the amendment to Finance Bill seeks to provide a marginal relief to individual taxpayers having borderline income by proposing a deduction of income tax payable in excess of the differential income above Rs 7 Lakh.

BRIEF POWERGRID WINS 6 PROJECTS THROUGH TARIFF-BASED COMPETITIVE BIDDING



Power Grid Corporation of India Limited (POWERGRID), a Maharatna CPSU under Ministry of Power, has acquired six project Special Purpose Vehicles (SPVs) for various transmission system projects after competing with various private sector players and emerging as a successful bidder in the Tariff Based Competitive Bidding process conducted by REC Power Development and Consultancy Limited (RECPDCL), as per the guidelines notified by Government of India.

These Project SPVs include Khavda RE Transmission Limited, KPS2 Transmission Limited, KPS3 Transmission Limited, Khavda II-B Transmission Limited, Khavda II-C Transmission Limited, ERWR Transmission Limited.

WPL GAME EQUALISER: BARCLAY

There is no reason for men and women’s game to be viewed as different, says ICC chairman

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Women's cricket has distinguished itself with the introduction of the WPL and it should not be viewed differently from the men's game anymore, says ICC chairman Greg Barclay.

He said the league will help uplift the women's game, thanks to the professionalism and money involved.

The first edition of the tournament will conclude here on Sunday.

"... As I say, I think it will be a great uplift for the women's game and I am looking forward to see how this tournament plays out," Barclay told the BCCI.

"Now, there is no reason for the two parts of the game, men and women, to be viewed as different. This is people playing cricket and they should be treated equally.

"Secondly, the professionalism and the remuneration that is afforded the players I think that's something that's going to be really important, again, for the women's game," he added.



The Women's Premier League, which was a long time coming, finally began on March 4 this year amid much fanfare.

"I think if you recognise the powerhouse that India is in terms of cricket, it's appropriate that they have launched the Women's Premier League. I know that Jay Shah (BCCI president) and his board and his team are really committed to making this one one of the biggest and best tournaments that it can possibly be.

"I am sure that they will be successful in that respect. I am really pleased and very appreciate that this has happened," Barclay said.

"I take my hat off to Jay and his team at the BCCI for the way they have approached this. That is exactly what I would have expected out of an Indian run competition, it's absolutely amazing. "Jay and his team are doing a wonderful job in leading the way in terms of getting the women's game to where it needs to be," he signed off.

Barclay is serving his second term as the chair of the game's apex body.



‘Hardik similar to Dhoni as captain’

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Having watched both of them from close quarters, Gujarat Titans spinner R Sai Kishore feels that his franchise skipper Hardik Pandya is very similar to legendary MS Dhoni in terms of leadership traits.

Sai Kishore, before joining Gujarat Titans, was with CSK for a couple of years.

"Hardik and Mahi bhai (MS Dhoni) are pretty similar in the way they handle things, they both are pretty calm," Sai Kishore told the media during a virtual interaction session on Friday.

"One thing that I really admire about Hardik is his ability to handle success and failure equally – that is something very unique about him. He is a level-headed guy and that works (for him)," he added.

The 28-year-old said Gujarat Titans, who won the IPL last year in their debut season, will have to replicate their performances from last season in order to be successful.

"The tag of being defending champions is up to us whether to take it or not. We played well last year and that is why we won. I think if we can do that (then) the tag won't matter much," he said. Sai Kishore said the new rule of having an 'Impact Player' in IPL will make it more manageable than what it was in domestic circuit.

"It is more like the super-sub rule where we can either use a

bowler or a batsman. It is basically like playing with 12 people. We have already played with this (rule) in domestic (cricket). The only change is that we can use it till the 20th over, in domestic it was restricted to the 14th over. In 20 overs, it should be a lot easier to handle," he said.

The Tamil Nadu left-arm spinner said he is eyeing a place in the Indian side via strong performances in the IPL.

"Yes, there are a lot of left-arm spinners in India and this (IPL) is a very good opportunity but I would like to be here now in the present and play well for Gujarat. In the last five years, my skill-set has gone up and I want to keep improving. If it happens that I do very well in the IPL, I am going to play for India," he said.

However, Sai Kishore admitted that he has to improve his batting to come into national reckoning.

"It is a work in progress. I have done well in domestic (cricket) also. I know the areas where I am good at and areas where I need to work on. I am trying to put in hours into my batting and fielding," he said.

"In the IPL and higher you go, you want to bat at the top. In Tamil Nadu, I have had the luxury of batting at the top in a few games. The death overs batting needs more work and attention. Finding a pattern or formula to score quick runs is what I am working on," Sai Kishore concluded.



David Warner will have point to prove in IPL, says Watson

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Former Australia all-rounder and assistant coach of Delhi Capitals Shane Watson says the team's new captain David Warner will have a "point to prove" in the upcoming season of the Indian Premier League, starting on March 31.

Warner, who joined Delhi Capitals ahead of the 2022 season, has been named captain for IPL 2023 due to Rishabh Pant being ruled out following a horrific car accident in December last year.

Warner has captained Delhi franchise in the past, the then Delhi Daredevils, and has had a successful run as a skipper in IPL with the Sunrisers Hyderabad, leading them to their only title win in the 2016 edition.

Warner had an overall successful stint with SRH, but his poor form with the bat and his subsequent fallout with the team management was followed by an unignifed exit in the 2021 season.

The leading run-scorer among all overseas players with 5,881 runs, Warner was removed as captain and was also benched permanently by the franchise and eventually released ahead of the 2022 mega auction.

He also endured a poor tour of India recently, failing with the bat in the two Tests at Nagpur and Delhi and scoring 23 in the only ODI he played post recovery from a hairline fracture to his left elbow.

"David Warner for me is just at the top of the order. He's going to continue to have a point to prove and everyone's going to be like riding off the back of him. He's always scored so many runs in the IPL. And to be an opening batter, and set the platform like he does is going to be very important," Watson told Star Sports.

The former Australia vice-captain Watson backed Mitchell Marsh to continue with his devastating form with the bat that he displayed in the ODI series win for Australia against India.

"(For) Mitchell Marsh, this is going to be another really big season for him. He's got incredible skill with the bat alone and how he's batting and takes the game on is going to play a really big part," Watson said.

Watson picked South Africa's Rilee Rossouw as the trump card for Delhi Capitals in IPL 2023.

"Well, one in particular is Rilee Rossouw, he's someone you know, I've played with him in the Pakistan Super League for Quetta Gladiators. And to see

how he has come back into international cricket and he's a world class hitter of the ball.

"He can take down any bowler at any stage, in any conditions. So if he gets on a roll, he can just take the game away from the opposition," he explained.

The Delhi Capitals assistant coach said his side has got all-round cover for the upcoming season.

"There's a lot of very talented players. We've got some youngsters with the ball, fast bowlers, we've got (Kamlesh) Nagarkoti and Chetan Sakariya. And then we've got our spinners as well, like Axar (Patel) and Kuldeep Yadav.

"Those two guys, to be able to have world class spinners bowling especially through the middle, to be able to try and get wickets and also keep the runs down, that's so critically important," he said.

Watson backed the pair of Patel and Kuldeep to take advantage of a spin-friendly pitch in their homeground.

"For sure, Delhi's normally, conventionally a lower, turning sort of wicket and we've got the bowlers to exploit that with our spinners alone. With Axar and also Kuldeep Yadav, but also with the batters that we've got, can really make the most of those conditions. It's a smaller ground as well," he said.

Watson admitted the absence of Pant will be a huge miss for the side.

"The biggest challenge for Delhi is just to be able to consistently put good performances together. You know, the Delhi Capitals have got a really, really skilful squad, and we do again this year.

"Obviously Rishabh Pant not being a part of, not playing this tournament is going to be a huge, huge miss," Watson expressed.

CSK's 2018 triumph tells you about leadership: Gavaskar praises Dhoni

New Delhi, Mar 24 (PTI) Recalling an ageing Chennai Super Kings' remarkable triumph after returning to IPL from a two-year ban, batting great Sunil Gavaskar praised talisman Mahendra Singh Dhoni and said his ability to get the best out of his players makes him stand out.

The upcoming edition of the IPL starts on March 31.

Speaking on Star Sports Network, Gavaskar recalled the highlights of the illustrious IPL career of 'Captain Cool' and how he has brought out the best in his team mates.

13 suspicious cricket matches were played across globe last year: Sportradar report

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

There were 13 competitive cricket matches that came under the cloud of suspicion in 2022, according to a review report published by Sportradar Integrity Services.

Sportradar Integrity Services unit is an international team of qualified integrity experts who deliver analysis on irregular betting, match-fixing and other forms of corruption in sports.

The 28-page report titled 'Betting, Corruption and Match-Fixing' states that in calendar year 2022, an unprecedented '1212 suspicious matches' were detected across 12 sporting disciplines in 92 countries.

The company uses an application Universal Fraud Detection System (UFDS) to detect suspicious activity during matches.

While football accounted for 775 matches, which possibly could have been corrupted, basketball is second in the list with 220 such games, and lawn tennis is third with 75 questionable games.

Interestingly, among 12 sports, cricket only has 13 allegedly corrupt games and is sixth in the list. The report claims that 13 corrupt games could still be the highest for the sport in a single year.

"Although a number of sports contin-



ue to display relatively low numbers of suspicious matches, 13 suspicious cricket matches is still the highest annual figure recorded by Sportradar Integrity Services, and handball and futsal also recorded their highest ever number of suspicious matches," the report stated.

The PTI had sent a questionnaire to Sportradar to understand which format has been corrupted the most and whether it is international games or matches in the T20

leagues. However, a look at the report states that the company is not referring to any matches played in India as per the graphics depicted in the report.

Therefore, one could ascertain that none of the 13 corrupt matches mentioned in the report has been played in India.

Sportradar, in fact, had partnered with the BCCI's anti-corruption unit in 2020 to detect betting irregularities during IPL matches.

Myanmar face stiff challenge against Kyrgyz in Tri-Nation football trophy

PTI ■ IMPHAL

Myanmar will square off against the Kyrgyz Republic in their second match of the Tri-Nation International Football Tournament at the Khuman Lampak Stadium here on Saturday.

The tournament sees international football being featured in the football-crazy state for the first time, as India play host to Myanmar and Kyrgyz Republic.

The two outstation teams have already been in Imphal over the past week, where they have been training in preparation for the tournament. Myanmar had faced India in the opening match, which the hosts won 1-0.

Myanmar head coach Michael Feichtenbeiner looked to ease the pressure off from his players' shoulders, as he chose to



focus on performance, rather than results.

"Our target is to improve our performance first, and then to improve as a team. Only then can we reach something in terms of results. Of course, we want to get better results, that's the main target overall," said Feichtenbeiner in a release.

Feichtenbeiner showed a lot of respect for the opposition team when asked about the Kyrgyz Republic.

"They have a strong line-up that will come to their advantage tomorrow. The last few matches were not as successful for us, but we want to change that and try our best," he said.

Sharath Kamal pulls out of Nationals due to back spasms

PTI ■ JAMMU

Back and calf issues have forced defending champion Achanta Sharath Kamal to pull out of the men's singles event of the 84th UTT Inter-State Senior National Table Tennis Championships beginning here on Saturday.

The last-minute pullout because of the recurring back and calf spasms that Sharath has suffered in the past two months have dealt a blow to the organisers and the local spectators.

But his absence would help former national champion G. Sathiyam's cause as he eyes his second title. Sharath, a 10-time national champion, said he has to be cautious and continue the rehab programmes devised before the World Championships in Durban in May.

"The Worlds in May last

week is my focus, and I want to prepare well for the big event. Most importantly, I don't want to aggravate the situation. I am going straight to rehab and concentrate just on the Durban Worlds," he said in a release.

The PSPB paddler indulged in extra stretching before the quarters and semi-finals of the team championships to keep fit. He was in discomfort, but his commitment to the team's cause kept him going as he competed and won the matches without letting the cat out of the bag.

As for the matches on the fifth day of the championships, the top 16 seeded players in the men's section and eight in the women's category will get into action from Saturday when the second stage draw, the knockout, begins. The women will play three rounds, while the men will play two. With the group topper



Kimmich praises Nagelsmann amid reports Bayern coach out



AP ■ FRANKFURT

Bayern Munich midfielder Joshua Kimmich praised Julian Nagelsmann as an "outstanding" coach Friday amid reports that the 35-year-old manager is set to be fired and replaced by Thomas Tuchel.

Both Kicker magazine and German tabloid Bild reported Thursday that Bayern was ending Nagelsmann's spell in charge following the team's 2-1 loss at Bayer Leverkusen in the Bundesliga on Sunday.

"I can only say that Julian Nagelsmann is an outstanding coach. Really, I've had a lot of coaches and a lot of top coaches and despite that

I'd say he's easily in the top three of my best coaches," Kimmich told reporters Friday as he prepares to captain Germany in a friendly against Peru on Saturday.

"As things stand at the moment, you can surely understand that I can't say anything" about the reports, he added.

Germany coach Hansi Flick, who was Nagelsmann's predecessor at Bayern, said he was "very surprised" to see reports saying Nagelsmann would be removed.

Bayern's defeat to Leverkusen dropped Bayern to second place in the Bundesliga, one point behind Borussia Dortmund before the teams clash in Munich in the "Klassiker" on April 1.

The Associated Press has asked Bayern for comment but the club has yet to make a statement about the situation.

Kicker reported that Bayern is in touch with Tuchel and that the German coach is expected to join Friday or Saturday. Tuchel led Chelsea to the Champions League title in 2021 and previously coached Paris Saint-Germain — losing the 2020 Champions League final to Bayern — and Dortmund.

Bayern faces Manchester City in the Champions League quarterfinals on April 11.

emerging as the qualifier for the knockout round, there will be a tough fight among the players in 78 groups (women) and 96 in men's singles, respectively.

Meanwhile, the 16 men and eight women players will have a good day's rest before the battle for the title and the prize purse of Rs. 16 lakh gets hot.

The top-ranked players in both sections are:

Men: G. Sathiyam, Manush Shah, Harmmeet Desai, Manav Thakkar, Sanil Shetty, Anirban Ghosh, Sudhanshu Grover, Jeet Chandra, SFR Snehit, Soumyajit Ghosh, Anthony Amalraj, Ronit Bhanja, Payas Jain, Deepit R. Patil, Yashansh Malik and Subh Goel.

Women: Manika Batra, Sreeja Akula, Reeth Rishya, Diya Chitale, Sutirtha Mukherjee, Anusha Kutumbale, Swastika Ghosh and Pra



बजट रेया: मूड बिंदु



कृषि

- झारखण्ड कृषि ऋण माफी योजना रे 4.5 लाख ऐंते पुरे: किसान को ₹1,727 करोड़ रेया: ऋण माफी
- सुखाड़ राहत योजना लागिड 13 लाखकिसान कोवा: खाता रे ₹461 करोड़ रेया: राशि हस्तांतरित जाना ओन्डो: सारे:या कन को देंगा को एमो:वा
- 5 एकड़ते कोम क्षेत्र रेया बांदा रेया: लोसोड आतोमे लागिड ओन्डो: दीप बोरिंग लागिड ₹500 करोड़
- मुख्यमंत्री पशुधन योजना रे लाखों किसान को जुड़ी ने ऐना लागिड ₹300 करोड़ रेया बजट मेना:
- गिरिडीह ओन्डो: जमशेदपुर रे नामा डेयरी प्लांट ओन्डो: रांची रे दूध उत्पाद प्लांट स्थापित होबाना
- लाखों दूध उत्पादक को ना:एते ₹3 प्रति लीटर रेया: दर ते प्रोत्साहन राशि को नामेया
- मिलेट उत्पादन रेया: प्रोत्साहन लागिड झारखण्ड राज्य मिलेट मिशन रेया: शुरुवात होबाना



ग्रामीण विकास

- बिरसा सिंचाई कूप संवर्धन मिशन पायेते 1 लाख किसान कोवा: निजी ओते रे सिंचाई कूप रेया: निर्माण होबाना
- पी एम आवास - ग्रामीण इलाका रे ओवा: बई लागिड ₹3,542 करोड़ रेया: प्रस्ताव होबाकाना



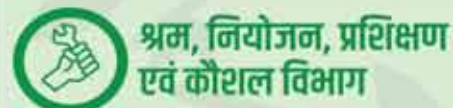
ग्रामीण कार्य

- पी एम ग्राम सड़क अंतर्गत 3,100 किमी होरा ओन्डो: 143 पुल बाई तेया: योजना मेना:
- सी एम ग्राम सड़क अंतर्गत साबिन स्वास्थ्य उपकेंद्र, बाजार-हाट, पंचायत कार्यालय, मिडिल-हाई स्कूल, पोस्ट-ऑफिस, बैंक को पक्का होरा लो:ते जोड़ावे तेया योजना
- पापारी होरा को बाईउरे लागिड होरा रेया: सतह नवीकरण ओन्डो: विशेष मरम्मत रेया: योजना शुरु होबाना



स्कूली शिक्षा एवं उच्च शिक्षा

- 80 उत्कृष्ट स्कूल ओन्डो: 325 प्रखंड स्तरीय लीडर स्कूल को लो: ते 4,091 ग्राम पंचायत स्तर रे आदर्श स्कूल रेया: पनाइटी होबान तना
- नेतरहाट स्कूल लेका चाईबासा, दुमका ओन्डो: बोकारो रे आवासीय विद्यालय रेया: निर्माण होबाना
- गुरुजी क्रेडिट कार्ड योजना, मुख्यमंत्री शिक्षा प्रोत्साहन योजना ओन्डो: एकलव्य प्रशिक्षण योजना पायेते करीब 37,000 छात्र -छात्रा को लाभ एमा को तेया: लक्ष्य मेना:



श्रम, नियोजन, प्रशिक्षण एवं कौशल विभाग

- मुख्यमंत्री सारथी योजना पायेते 14,0000 सेपेड-हापानुम को कौशल प्रशिक्षण को नामेया। प्रशिक्षण तायोम ते रोजगार का नामो: रे 6 महीने लागिड सेपेड को ₹1,000 ओन्डो: हापानुम ओन्डो: दिव्यांग को ₹1,500 प्रति महीने को नामेया



अनुसूचित जनजाति, अनुसूचित जाति, अल्पसंख्यक एवं पिछड़ा वर्ग कल्याण

- वित्तीय वर्ष 2022-23 रे प्री मेट्रिक छात्रवृत्ति तहत 22 लाख ऐंते पुरे: पट्टा को ₹462 करोड़ ऐंते पुरे: को भुगतान याना
- मुख्यमंत्री रोजगार सृजन योजना (ढमकच) पायेते 5,600 युवा को ना: जोग्य लाभ को नामा कडा। 2023-24 रे योजना पायेते 2 लाख युवा को लाभ एमा को तेया: लक्ष्य मेना:
- साबिन छात्रावास रे छात्र -छात्रा को नि:शुल्क जोमा:-मांडी ओन्डो: हॉस्टल रे रसोईया ओन्डो: एमन कर्मी को टाड़ने

- हॉस्टल रे मॉडल लाइब्रेरी रेया स्थापना रेया: लक्ष्य मेना:

- जनजातीय संस्कृति ओन्डो: कला केंद्र रे पारम्परिक वाद्ययंत्र रेया: आपूर्ति रेया: प्रस्ताव मेना:

- मानकी, मुंडा, डाकुआ एमन को न्यायिक, प्रशासनिक ओन्डो: वित्तीय पनाइटी लागिड दोपहिया वाहन एमा को तेया: प्रस्ताव मेना:



स्वास्थ्य, चिकित्सा शिक्षा एवं परिवार कल्याण

- बेकारो ओन्डो: रांची रे मेडिकल कॉलेज रेया: स्थापना होबाना
- पलामू चाईबासा ओन्डो: दुमका रे मनोचिकित्सा केंद्र रेया: स्थापना प्रस्तावित मेना:
- मोबाइल ग्राम क्लिनिक रेया: सञ्चालन ओन्डो: प्रबंधन
- नामा नर्सिंग ओन्डो: फार्मसी कॉलेज रेया: स्थापना होबाना



महिला, बाल विकास एवं सामाजिक सुरक्षा

- सर्वजन पेंशन योजना लागिड ₹2,131 करोड़ प्रस्तावित मेना:
- महिला ओन्डो: किशोरी कल्याण योजना रेया: शुरुवात होबाना
- 800 नामा आंगनवाड़ी भवन रेया: निर्माण होबाना



जल संसाधन

- पटमदा ओन्डो: पलामू रे मेगा लिफ्ट सिंचाई परियोजना प्रस्तावित मेना:। दुमका रे मसलिया-रानेश्वर ओन्डो: देवघर-जामताड़ा रे सिकरिया रे मेगा लिफ्ट सिंचाई परियोजना रेया: पनाइटी होबान तना



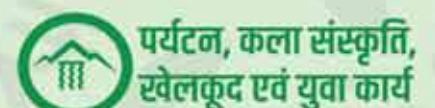
पथ निर्माण

- रांची रे सिरमटोली चैक ऐंते राजेंद्र चैक जोका फ्लाईओवर, कांटाटोली फ्लाईओवर ओन्डो: विकास विद्यालय ऐंते नामकुम जोका फोरलेन रेया: पनाइटी होबान तना
- नेन होरा को बाइओतेया: मेना:
 - 1.साहेबगंज-बरहेट-जामताड़ा-दुमका-गोविंदपुर
 - 2.कोडरमा-जमुआ-गिरिडीह-टुंडी-गोविन्दपुर (SH-13)
 3. सतसंग-मिरखीबाद



ऊर्जा

- 100 यूनिट नि:शुल्क बिजली योजना रे 18 लाख उपभोक्ता को लाभ को नामे ताना। वित्तीय वर्ष 2023-24 रे योजना लागिड ₹2,300 करोड़ रेया: बजट मेना:



पर्यटन, कला संस्कृति, खेलकूद एवं युवा कार्य

- खेलकूद को बढ़ाओ लागिड ग्रास रुट ट्रेनिंग सेंटर ओन्डो: सिद्धो-कान्हू युवा क्लब रेया: स्थापना होबाना



नगर विकास एवं आवास

- रामगढ़ ओन्डो: सिमडेगा शहरी जलापूर्ति ओन्डो: 45 बाँदा को रेया: जीर्णोदर होबाना
- झुमरीतिलैया ओन्डो: मेदिनीनगर शहरी जलापूर्ति योजना ओन्डो: रांची इंटेक वर्क्स रेया: निर्माण होबाना
- JHARKHAND MUNICIPAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECT (JMDP) रे लोहरदगा, गुमला ओन्डो: कपाली नगर निकाय रे शहरी जलापूर्ति योजना रेया: पनाइटी आयोबो: लागिडकोरे कमी एयहोबोआ



वन पर्यावरण एवं जलवायु परिवर्तन

- लघु वन उत्पाद कोवा: प्रसंस्करण इकाई कोवा: प्रोत्साहन
- बुरु बितर मेना: हातु को, ओकोन रे ना: जोका पक्का होरा का सेटेश काना, एन साबिन हातु को पक्का होरा लो: जोड़ावे तेया: लक्ष्य